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HARSHA

V. D. GANGAL

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HARSHA

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FOREWORD

THIS COUNTRY has produced remarkable personalities in every walk of life since the earliest times. Our history is crowded with names of outstanding persons who have made notable contribution whether in art, literature, politics, science or other fields. Some are household words. There are many whose names are familiar but about whose life and work little is known to the public. There are others about whom people know little but who have made remarkable achievements.

The history of a country is, to a great extent, the history of its great men and women. They have moulded it and built it up. It is essential for the ordinary citizen to know something about these personalities in order to understand how our country has evolved.

Harsha is a great name in Indian history. He distinguished himself equally in arts of peace and war. He was a mighty ruler, a heroic military leader, a keen lover of arts and letters and a man of noble instincts and attractive personality. We are grateful to Shri V. D. Gangal, a Sanskrit scholar and a member of Indian Administrative Service for undertaking to write this book for the Trust.

NEW DELHI
January 30, 1968

B. V. KESKAR

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I

INTRODUCTORY

'एतेन खलु राजन्वती पृथिवी।' "Through him does the earth indeed possess a true king". This is the tribute paid to one of the greatest sons of India—King Harsha—by the famous Sanskrit poet and biographer—Bāṇa. Ancient Indian history is, by and large, shrouded in mystery because detailed records of events and happenings have not come down to us in well-preserved documents. Not so, however, with regard to King Harsha, who, according to Bāṇa was "wonderful in his royalty and surpassed even the gods". Luckily we have got enough historical material to enable us to understand the events of the reign of King Harsha rather vividly. Firstly, as indicated above, we have the famous work of Bāṇa—known as *Harshacharitam* —written in his typical ornate style which gives us in great detail, how Harsha, though the second son of Prabhākaravardhana and therefore only an heir presumptive, became a king; how his first task was to avenge the murder of his elder brother and also the ill-treatment received by his sister and so on. Bāṇa goes on to tell us how the brilliant career of conquest started by King Harsha culminated in his influence extending over the whole of Northern India (including what is now Gujarat) *i.e.* from Nepal and probably Kashmir in the North down to the banks of river Narmada and from Assam in the East to Jullundur in the West. It may, however, be pointed out that the areas directly administered by Harsha included only the Eastern Punjab, the whole of U.P.,

Bihar and portion of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. A portion of Western Bengal was also included within his empire. King Harsha had a long reign of nearly forty-one years.

Bāṇa's account of Harsha's life is unfortunately incomplete. Bāṇa has written only eight chapters (Uchchhvāsas) and his book—rather abruptly—ends at a stage when King Harsha is described to be at the height of his glory. The king had just been able to rescue his unfortunate sister—Rājyaśrī—and had yet to fulfil his vow to destroy the Gauḍa King when Bāṇa ends his book. Perhaps he did not intend to end his book at that point but for some reason, not clearly established, he left his work half-finished. Even though in the 3rd chapter, there is a reference to Bāṇa's conversation with his cousins in which he pleads his incapacity to do justice to the entire career of the great King—"even hundred lives may not suffice" (कः खलु पुरुषायुषशतेनापि शक्नुयादविकलमस्य चरितं वर्णयितुम्) Bāṇa's statement only shows his modesty. He has shown similar modesty in one of the introductory stanzas in which he says that he was "jumping into an ocean" in trying to narrate a long story (करोम्याख्यायिकाम्भोधौ जिह्वाप्लवनचापलम् ।). But that is only out of his feeling of devotion to the great King. Thus there is no internal evidence to establish that Bāṇa deliberately left his work unfinished. Bāṇa's other famous work—Kādambarī—was also left incomplete due to his death and his son Bhūṣaṇabāṇa completed it.

We have some other material to draw from when we want to know more about King Harsha. In the 7th century after Christ, there came to India a religious-minded Chinese pilgrim, Yuan Chwang by name. The

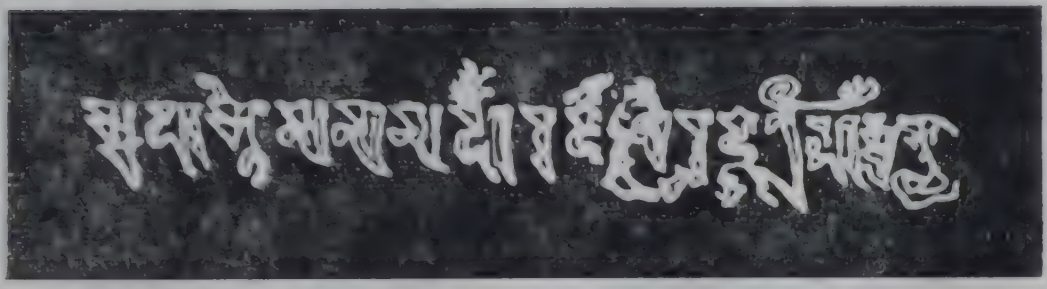
pilgrim's name is spelt differently by various scholars such as Hiouen Thsang or Huen Tsang. But "Yuan Chwang" is the most appropriate English rendering of the Chinese name. Yuan Chwang was the youngest of four brothers. Yuan Chwang himself was a great scholar and a philosopher. In his own country he was held in high esteem. He came from an illustrious Chen Hui family which could trace its descent from a royal line. In his early life Yuan Chwang showed great enthusiasm for Buddhist learning and a thirst for knowledge. In those days when communications were very difficult he came all the way from China and spent fifteen years in this country travelling from place to place. He spent quite some time at the court of King Harsha. Yuan Chwang has kept a record of his impressions in his travel book called "Hsi-yu-chi" or "Si Yu Ki". The book, the full title of which is "Ta-Tang-Hsi-Yu-Chi" meaning "Records of Western Lands of the Great Tang Period", is a great source of information to the student of Ancient Indian History for it throws a flood of light on the social, religious and political conditions of the Indian Sub-Continent in the 7th century. The Hsi-yu-chi exists in several editions which present some degree of variations both in the text and in the supplementary notes and explanations. However, it is a happy coincidence that Yuan Chwang stayed long enough in King Harsha's court to help us get detailed information regarding the conditions of life during Harsha's time.

There is another lucky coincidence. As already stated above, Bāṇa's life of Harsha ends rather abruptly at a stage when the king was at the height of his glory. Historically speaking, Bāṇa's story ends round about the

year 612 A.D. when King Harsha recovered his widowed sister Rājyaśrī. Yuan Chwang arrived in India much later (in 630 A.D.) but his story of Harsha's life does cover the period from where Bāṇa left it. Thus fate seems to have ordained that for the benefit of the historian, Yuan Chwang should pick up the thread of King Harsha's life where it was left by the poet Bāṇa. The Chinese pilgrim remained in India for fifteen years and his Hsi-yu-chi gives us plenty of material not only regarding King Harsha's reign for the period 630 to 645 A.D. but also of the early life of the king. The king outlived Yuan Chwang's stay in India by only a few years. The account written by Yuan Chwang is supplemented by the great traveller's biography which was written by one of his friends and is known as Hwui-Li or "Life of Yuan Chwang". That book too supplies some material to enable us to understand a little more of Indian History in the days of King Harsha.

We have yet another source of information from which to draw material which will enable us to understand King Harsha. There are several inscriptions of King Harsha himself and also of his contemporaries that throw a flood of light on the social and political conditions prevailing in those times. Three known inscriptions of King Harsha which supply valuable information are the Madhuban Copper Plate, the Bānskherā Plate and the Sonepat Copper Seal. The first seems to have been issued in the year 631 A.D. (25th year of King Harsha's reign) and the second in 628 A.D. (22nd year of the king's reign). To issue these inscriptions was one method of proclaiming the king's edicts. The edicts mention the place from which the charter is issued and

bears the signature of the King stating (as in the "orders" issued now in civilized countries) "this is the signature of His Majesty King Harsha (स्वहस्तो मम महाराजाधिराजश्री-हर्षस्य)." A reproduction of King Harsha's autograph from the Bānskherā Plate will be of interest to readers and is therefore reproduced below.



Besides the sources indicated above, there is other material too. In Sanskrit literature there are references to King Harsha. Even though there were four other personages who were also known as Harsha, there are some unmistakable references to our hero. Bāṇa was King Harsha's contemporary and when his date is fixed we can fix King Harsha's date too. In Kāvya-Prakāśa, as also in Dhvanyāloka, there are references to King Harsha. King Harsha was himself a man of letters. He has written at least three plays known as (1) Priya-Darśikā, (2) Ratnāvalī and (3) Nāgānanda. There are also some poems written by him. That literature gives us an idea of how people lived in King Harsha's time.

All these bits of information when pieced together give us a clearer picture of King Harsha than we have of most other Indian Princes of ancient India.

II

EARLY LIFE

KING HARSHA was born in a royal family in succession to a long line of kings who had made their mark in history. The Madhuban and Banskhera Plates (issued round about 630 A.D.) furnish the genealogy of the great king. The immediate ancestors of King Harsha were

Father	:	Prabhākaravardhana
Mother	:	Yaśomati
Grand father	:	Ādityavardhana
Great Grand father	:	Rājyavardhana

The founder of the house was Pushpabhūti, who was a devoted worshipper of Lord Śiva. We shall, however, concern ourselves with Harsha's parents and brother and sister for the present.

King Prabhākaravardhana was a very competent chief and had his capital at Sthāṇvīśvara, the modern Thānesar. This place must have been somewhere between present Ambala and Delhi. King Prabhākaravaradhana was brave and Bāṇa, in his typical rhythmic style, describes him as a "lion to a deer when dealing with the Hūṇas" or "like a burning fever to the king of the Indus region". King Prabhākaravardhana's exploits "spoiled the sleep of the Gujarat King" and "served like a bilious plague to the scent elephant of the King of the Gāndhārās." Levelling on every side, hills and ditches, shrubs and forests, thickets and ant hills, mountains and caves, his victorious armies made broad roads for the purpose of intercourse in his vast kingdom. These conquests made him "Mahārājā-

dhirāja" and "Paramabhattāraka" as opposed to the ordinary "Mahāraja".

This brave king married Yaśomati, daughter of another renowned Prince of Mālava and had three children of whom Rājyavardhana was the eldest, King Harsha was the second and the youngest was Princess Rājyaśrī.

Records are available from which we know the exact date and month of Harsha's birth. He was born in the year 590 A.D. on the 12th day of the latter half of the month of Jyaishtha (corresponding to June). The Sonepat Inscription also gives the exact time of birth as "just after twilight". Prince Rājyavardhana was born about four years earlier than Harsha while Princess Rājyaśrī followed Harsha after a year and a half. In his *Harshacharitam* Bāṇa tells us that when Rājyaśrī was born, Harsha was old enough to just manage five or six steps with the support of his nurse. About that time Queen Yaśomati's brother sent his son Bhaṇḍin—who was then eight years old—as a companion to the princes. Since Bhaṇḍin was a little older than Rājyavardhana, he became an intimate friend and adviser to the brothers as they grew up. When Rājyaśrī grew up, she was given away in marriage to Grahavarman, son of the Maukhari King. She went with her husband to Kānyakubja.

The capital, Sthāṇviśvara (which word is made up from Sthāṇu (meaning Lord Śiva) and Īśvara (meaning overlord) was known as a holy ground—the Land of Kuru—famous as the battlefield of legendary warriors. In the latter half of the 6th century, King Prabhākaravardhana had already defeated the Mālavas, the Huṇas and the Gurjaras. It was in the year 604 A.D. that the brave king again decided to attack the Huṇas on the North

Western Frontier. The king was perhaps too old and, therefore, he put his elder son Rājyavardhana, who was then just eighteen years old, in charge of the marching army. Harsha, then only fourteen, would not remain behind and followed his brother with a cavalry force. While the elder brother was busy fighting deep into the enemy territory, young Harsha lingered in the woods hunting wild animals like lions, bears and tigers.

While he was thus engaged, one day Harsha had forebodings of a disaster to come. His left eye was throbbing incessantly, his whole body—for no apparent reason —was trembling, he became dejected and his heart seemed to jump out of its place. In this mental state, Harsha did not indulge, on that day, in his usual pastime. His fears soon came true because a messenger named Kuraṅgaka arrived there and handed over a 'Note' to Harsha. That note conveyed the sorry tidings of the king's serious illness with some kind of high fever. Harsha, unable to contact his elder brother, speeded back to the capital to meet his ailing father. It took Harsha three days to reach the capital but during those three days he ate nothing. No wonder, therefore, that the king from his sick bed noticed that Harsha had become very weak and thin.

Harsha enquired of one and all about the king's health but no one was in a position to help. It was a young physician, well versed in Āyurveda, however, who confided in Harsha, but merely said that he would state the correct position regarding the king's illness the "next" morning. Unfortunately, the king died soon thereafter. Perhaps the physician had foreseen this. A monument in brick was made for the king, while Harsha sent for his

brother who hastened back to the capital. But Rājyavardhana had sustained several injuries in the fighting against the Huṇas and when he came back he was covered with bandages of white cloth. Grief-stricken by his father's death, Rājyavardhana was thinking of renouncing the world and was actually imploring Harsha to take the throne. The noble Harsha, however, declined and Rājyavardhana succeeded the throne. It is doubted by some whether Rājyavardhana actually ascended the throne or not. Bāṇa, though not denying the fact of accession, mentions that when Rājyavardhana was refusing to ascend the throne because he wanted to renounce the world, news came of the murder of his sister's husband. Other historians, however, take the view that Rājyavardhana was formally crowned king after Harsha had refused to accept the throne.

More bad news, however, was on its way. Princess Rājyaśrī, so happily married to Grahavarman, suddenly became a widow—her husband's head being cut off by the King of Mālava who had kept the Princess in captivity at Kanauj. The Mālava Prince had probably considered the death of King Prabhākaravardhana and the preoccupation of the two Princes with the campaign against the Huṇas, a good opportunity to reassert his independence. Rājyavardhana who had only recently ascended the throne, could not tolerate such an insult and that too coming from one who was vastly inferior in strength. In Bāṇa's words, Rājyavardhana burst out: "Mālava to insult the race of Pushpabhūti. It is like a mere frog trying to slap a cobra or a calf attempting to take a tiger as a prisoner". He ordered the beating of the marching drum, and asked Bhaṇḍi—his cousin—to

accompany him with a force of ten thousand. Harsha felt odd to have to remain behind and not be able to take part in the crusade. He pleaded with his brother that he would either accompany the king or would like to finish the job himself. But somehow Rājyavardhana persuaded his young brother to stay behind and look after the kingdom. Even though he felt like an elephant staying away from his herd, Harsha accepted his brother's command and stayed behind.

Yet another tragedy was, however, in the offing. Young Harsha carried on his duties in the capital for a few days, quite sure that his elder brother—the King—would settle the score with Mālava in no time. There he was right because Rājyavardhana subdued the Mālava Prince with ridiculous ease but, as luck would have it, the King of the Gauḍas—Śaṣānka—induced, by false civilities, the victorious Rājyavardhana to go alone to his palace and there had him slain. The reasons for this murder are not on record. It appears, however, that Rājyavardhana after making short work of Mālava went further east, treading on more toes. That perhaps aroused jealousy. When the sad news of his brother's death was brought to Harsha by the old trusted servant Kuntala, he immediately resolved to avenge this treacherous murder. Yuan Chwang identifies the Gauḍa King as Śaṣānka—the wicked king of Karṇasuvarṇa in East India. Bāṇa refers to him as the King of the Gauḍas while Yuan Chwang describes him as Karṇasuvarṇa, a persecuter of Buddhism who broke up the Buddhist monasteries, threw the sacred stone bearing Buddha's foot-prints into the Ganges, and cut down the Bodhi tree at Gaya. He made his presence felt all over the country and had become insolent. He

it was who, in conjunction with the Mālava prince of the Gupta dynasty, overthrew the powerful prince of Kanauj. Rājyavardhana was murdered by them and it is said that but for Harsha's timely action, they would have marched north towards Sthāṇviśvara itself. The reason for the treacherous murder is not known to us but a commentator on Bāṇa's *Harshacharitam* refers to Śaśānka's offering his daughter in marriage to Rājyavardhana.

Anyway the murder had to be avenged soon. After all, Sthāṇviśvara was supposed to be a sovereign state by all and it had to exercise its authority by show of force. When two members of the royal family are so humiliated, it would make even a worm turn.

At this time, Harsha was barely fourteen or fifteen years old. The throne had fallen vacant and he seemed to be the rightful claimant to it. Yuan Chwang's account of the statesmen of Kanauj entreating Harsha to ascend the throne which had fallen vacant makes interesting reading. Says Yuan Chwang : "This sovereign was of the Vaiṣya caste, his personal name was Harshavardhana, and he was the younger son of the great king whose name was Prabhākaravardhana. When the latter died he was succeeded on the throne by his elder son named Rāja-(or Rajya) vardhana. The latter, soon after his accession, was treacherously murdered by Śaśānka, the wicked king of Karṇasuvarṇa in East India, a persecutor of Buddhism. Hereupon the statesmen of Kanauj, on the advice of their leading men Bāṇī (or Vāṇī), invited Harshavardhana, the younger brother of the murdered king, to become their sovereign. The prince modestly made excuses, and seemed unwilling to comply with their request."

"When the ministers of state pressed Harshavardhana

to succeed his brother and avenge his murder", the narrative goes on to relate, "the prince was determined to take the advice of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśwara (whose name is given in the translation of Kuan-tzu-tsai, the "Beholding Lord"). An image of this Bodhisattva, which had made many spiritual manifestations, stood in grove of this district near the Gangā. To this he repaired ; and after due fasting and prayer, he stated his case to the Bodhisattva. An answer was graciously given which told the Prince that it was his good karma that had helped him to become king, and that he should accordingly, accept the offered sovereignty and then raise Buddhism from the ruin into which it had been brought by the king of Karṇasuvarṇa, and afterwards make himself a great king. The Bodhisattva promised him secret help, but warned him not to occupy the actual throne, and not to use the title Mahārāja. Thereupon Harshavardhana became king of Kanauj with the title Śīlāditya and called himself 'Kumāra' or a king's son.

Continuing his narrative, the pilgrim goes on to state that "as soon as Śilāditya became ruler he got together a great army, and set out to avenge his brother's murder and to reduce the neighbouring countries to subjection. Proceeding eastwards he invaded the states which had refused allegiance, and waged incessant warfare until in six years he had fought the Five Indias (reading 'chii'; according to the other reading 'chen', he brought the Five Indias *under allegiance*). Then, having enlarged his territory, he increased his army, bringing the elephant corps upto 60,000 and the cavalry to 100,000, and reigned in peace for thirty years without raising a weapon. He was just in his administration, punctilious in the discharge

of his duties. He forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works. He caused the use of animal food to cease throughout the Five Indias, and he prohibited the taking of life under severe penalties. He erected thousands of *stoopas* (स्तूप) on the banks of the Gangā, established Travellers' Rests throughout his dominions, and erected Buddhist monasteries at the sacred places of the Buddhists. He regularly held the Quinquennial Convocation; and gave away in religious alms everything except the material of war. Once a year he summoned all the Buddhist monks together, and for twenty-one days supplied them with the regulation requisites. He furnished the chapels and liberally adorned the common halls of the monasteries. He brought the Brethren together for examination and discussion, giving rewards and punishment according to merit and demerit. Those Brethren who kept the rules of their Order strictly and were thoroughly sound in theory and practice he "advanced to the Lion's Throne" (that is, promoted to the highest place) and from these he received religious instruction; those who, though perfect in the observance of the ceremonial code, were not learned in the past, he merely honoured with formal reverence; those who neglected the ceremonial observances of the Order and whose immoral conduct was notorious, were banished from his presence and from the country. The neighbouring princes, and the statesmen, who were zealous in good works, and unwearied in the search for moral excellence, he led to his own seat, and called "good friends", and he would not converse with those who were of a different character. The king also made visits of inspection throughout his dominion, not

residing long at any place but having temporary buildings erected for his residence at each place of sojourn, and he did not go on tours during the three months of the rainy season. At the royal lodges every day viands were provided for 1000 Buddhist monks and 500 Brahmins. The king's day was divided into three periods of which one was given to affairs of government, and two were devoted to religious works. He was indefatigable, and the day was too short for him."

Bāṇa, however, tells us that it was Siṁhanāda, rather than Bhaṇḍi, who was more concerned with Harsha's accession. Both seem to agree that there was considerable hesitation on Harsha's part in becoming a king.

There seems to be a little confusion, however, among historians on this point. Some attribute Harsha's hesitation (to accept the throne) to his religious leanings which became more acute on account of the series of misfortunes that befell him in the space of just a few days. Others feel that Rājyavardhana may have had an offspring (of which there is no mention anywhere) or his widow might be expecting one, and that that offspring—in Harsha's view—was the rightful claimant to the throne. There is, however, little evidence to support the latter view. Then again, different accounts come from Yuan Chwang and Bāṇa as regards whether it was Bhaṇdin or Siṁhanāda who ultimately prevailed upon Harsha to accept the throne. The fact of the matter, however, appears to be that both did their best to persuade him to accept not one but two thrones—both of which fell vacant by Rājyavardhana's death : the request from Bhaṇḍin referred to the Kanauj throne and the one from Siṁhanāda—the old Commander-in-Chief—to the Sthāṇviśvara throne.

What the "religious" reasons for not accepting the throne were, is not known. Some feel that in the early part of his life Harsha had joined the Buddhist clan. This, however, seems to be far-fetched, firstly, because it must be remembered that at that time Harsha was a mere boy—only fourteen years old—and secondly, Harsha at that very time decided to wage bloody wars with all those who did not accept his authority. Harsha must have become a Buddhist much later—*i.e.* after completing his extensive conquests.

Anyway, Harsha did not accept the title of a sovereign monarch but was content with styling himself as Prince (Rājputra) Śilāditya.

III

HARSHA'S CAMPAIGNS

WHETHER Harsha permitted himself to be crowned or not is not very material for our study of his life. There was no doubt that he was the *de facto* king and every-one also recognised his *de jure* title to the throne. On taking over the administration, his first task naturally was to avenge his brother's death and to assert his authority over the Feudal Lords, not only like Gauḍa or Mālava but also others who might be feeling that the Sthāṇviśvara throne was cracking. It often happens that when central leadership is weak or is seen to wilt under pressure from local leaders, a tendency slowly develops among the vasaals to become more and more defiant. It was Harsha's first task to establish it—once for all—that he meant business and that no vasaal must forget that he existed as such only because he was allowed to do so by the Sthāṇviśvara throne. It was not only that, but he decided to go further and meet powerful enemies beyond his frontiers whether to the East or West, South or North.

Harsha had set before him another equally important task. His young sister Rājyaśri—now a widow—was humiliated as a result of the same process of thinking that is to say: with the death of Prabhākaravardhana, the centre had ceased to be powerful. She was not only widowed by the cruel murder of her young husband, but she was also ill-treated. She was put in a prison at Kānyakubja, with fetters on her feet, like the wife of a common thief. Harsha had, therefore, to take immediate

steps to free his sister from the Kānyakubja prison and also to teach a lesson to Śaṣānka who had perpetuated the heinous crime. Bāṇa describes Harsha's mental condition at that time. He says Harsha then looked awesome like Lord Vishnu in Nṛsimhāvatāra (हरिरिव प्रकटितनृसिंहरूपः।) or like Janamejaya intent on burning all sovereigns (पारिक्षित इव सर्वभोगिदहनोद्यतः) : or like Bhīma thirsty to drink the enemy's blood. (वृकोदर इव रिपुरूधिरतृषितः।)

Simhanāda, the Commander-in-Chief, correctly advised Harsha: "Do not worry about the Gauḍa only. You should so deal with others that no one will dare follow his example. Look at the example of Paraśurāma, the son of Jamadagni. His father was killed; he was alone; he was brought up in a forest; being a Brahmin by birth he was naturally of a mild temperament. But he too —once he had made up his mind to take revenge—massacred the entire race of Kṣhatriyas as many as twenty-one times. With the old king gone to heavens, with Rājyavardhana's life taken by the cruel Gauḍa and with such a calamity on our heads, you are the only one left to protect the earth. Console the helpless subjects by placing your foot on the heads of kings like the rays of autumn sun (causing heat) on their foreheads.
(देव देवभूमिगते नरेन्द्रे, दुष्टगौडभुजङ्गदग्धजीविते च राज्यवर्धने वृत्तेऽस्मिन् महाप्रलये धरणीधारणायाधुना त्वं शेषः। क्षमाश्वासय अशरणा; प्रजाः। क्षमापतीनां शिरःसु शरत्सवितेव ललाटंतपान् प्रयच्छ पादन्यासान्।)"

Harsha decided to follow the old man's advice. He took a solemn vow that in a matter of days he would accomplish his task. Said Harsha's proclamation thus: "Let all kings keep their hands ready to pay tribute or alternatively to grasp the sword; let them seize the realms

of space or chowries; Let them bend their heads or let them bend their bows *i.e.* offer battle; Let each one of them adorn his ears with my command (accept my authority) or adorn the ears with bow-strings; Let all of them crown their heads with the dust of my feet or with helmets."

This was an open challenge to all the kings—big or small—to make up their minds.

And Harsha did mean business. He summoned before him the commander of his whole elephant troop and asked him to call back the elephant herds out at pasture because he was planning a march for a world-wide conquest. While the loyal commander had no hesitation in complying with the master's command, he was elderly enough to advise the young boy who was now his king. Said he : "Out of my devotion to you, I want to say something important. Please listen to that. You are born in a great family. But there are bad people all around. Please, therefore, be careful in dealing with men. Do not confide easily in any person. Be careful" and then he quoted a few instances in history where, because of the king falling in love with a pretty woman or owing to intrigue, disasters had overtaken him. These instances are not a figment of imagination but real historical occurrences—some of which have been referred to in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra too. Some are referred to in Bṛhat-samhitā also. Stories of secrets going out through pets or through over-reliance on pretty women or through addiction to something are not peculiar to India. Anyway, he said: "O Harsha, you have seen what happened to your brother. These are the ways of the world. You meet all kinds of people in various countries and cities. This

practice of trusting all, though inherently good and though inherited by you from your illustrious forefathers, may not necessarily pay you all the time. Be careful, young man, as you get along."

These golden words of advice were accepted by the young king who, on an auspicious day, commenced his march. His first halt was on the bank of river Saraswati and there the village officer presented him a golden seal, requesting him to issue a charter. An incident occurred then which throws light on Harsha's way of thinking. The golden seal bearing Harsha's mark, inadvertently fell from his hands. The people around Harsha considered this as an ill omen to the march of conquest he was undertaking. But Harsha himself interpreted it differently. He said that "men unnecessarily misinterpret occurrences and then worry themselves, when what is considered as an ill omen makes its appearance. Now in this case the golden seal has fallen to the ground. That really means my name is now stamped on Mother Earth. In other words, Mother Earth from now on belongs to me. I am to become the Lord of the world". Whether there is logic in this or not, one thing is clear. Even though he was a young boy, he was able to take an optimistic view of life and did not allow himself to be goaded or guided by conventional interpreters.

The army thus proceeded further. At the end of a day's long march, when the horses were stabled, came a confidential messenger from the country of Prāgjyotiṣa (now known as Assam). His name was Haṁsavega and he was sent by Kumāra *alias* Bhāskaravarman, the king of Assam. The messenger said that the king of Assam desired to form an alliance and a treaty of undying friend-

ship with Harsha. Haṁsavega had been sent with a number of beautiful presents, one of which was a white umbrella which belonged to Varuṇa. The umbrella had a long history and Haṁsavega narrated it in detail and also traced the genealogy of the forefathers of Kumāra—the king of Assam. The important part of the message was the desire for undying friendship which Harsha was prompt to reciprocate. With this alliance with the king in the easternmost part of India, Harsha was able to march against intermediate rulers with more confidence. Haṁsavega was sent back with greetings of warm friendship accompanied by equally beautiful presents from Harsha

Cheered by the offer of alliance of the Assam king, Harsha marched forward with all his might against his immediate foe—the Gauḍa. It must be remembered that communications in those days were maintained mainly through seasoned messengers. One day a message came to Harsha, still in his camp, that Bhaṇḍi, his cousin, who had accompanied Rājyavardhana in his campaign against the Mālava king, was camping close by. The messenger brought the good news that the Mālava king had already been conquered. Bhaṇḍi soon appeared before his cousin and narrated the whole story of how Rājyavardhana was killed. Bhaṇḍi also gave him the news about Harsha's sister Rājyaśrī. He said that she had been set free from the prison but was at the moment not traceable, she having taken recourse to a jungle. This was because she thought that she would have to face more humiliation after the death of her brother Rājyavardhana. At this, Harsha's heart naturally melted, and he became very anxious to trace his little sister's whereabouts. We do not know how Bhaṇḍi had dealt with Śaśānka—the king

of Gauḍa—who had treacherously slain Harsha's elder brother, Rājyavardhana. It appears, however, that though defeated by Harsha's armies, Śaśānka was not captured, and managed to maintain his existence somehow. It is on record that he continued to be a king for some twelve years thereafter. It is possible that Harsha occupied Western Bengal only after the death of Śaśānka in 637 A.D.

Harsha, however, decided to devote his whole attention towards recovering Rājyaśrī. He entered the Vindhya forest knowing not where to locate the unlucky girl. He, however, met a Bhil named Nirghāta, who was the commander-in-chief of the Bhils. The Bhil Chief suggested to Harsha to go to the hermitage of an ascetic named Divākaramitra. The latter was a convert from Brahmanism to Buddhism. In that hermitage Harsha got the news—brought by a Bhikshu—that a young lady was on the point of committing suicide by burning herself. Anxious for his sister's whereabouts, Harsha rightly guessed that she could be Rājyaśrī. And he was right. He rushed there and she was saved from the rash act, and the reunion of brother and sister took place. She explained how in sheer desparation she decided to kill herself. Now that she was saved, she wanted to take to red garments and become a Samnyāsnī. But Harsha requested her to stay with him.

Now Harsha was free to establish himself as the real sovereign. He had fulfilled the two immediate tasks before him. His brother's murderer as also the king who had killed his sister's husband were now both prostrate. He collected a very big army consisting of elephants (5,000), cavalry (20,000) and infantry (50,000). According

to Yuan Chwang's account, he first marched eastward. This was quite natural. To understand his strategy one should have before oneself a picture of the political powers that ruled in the various parts of India at that time.

Harsha's forefathers were known as Maharajas—a term which referred to small kings. The implication was that Sthāṇvīśvara was then just a small kingdom. King Prabhākaravardhana made it very powerful and big. Bāṇa describes Prabhākaravardhna as "a lion to the Huṇa deer, a burning fever to the king of the land of Indus, a menace of the sleep of the Gurjars, a bilious plague to the lord of Gāndhāras, a looter to the lawlessness of Lāṭas, an axe to the creeper of Mālavas". (हूणहरिणकेसरी, सिन्धुराजज्वरो गुर्जरप्रजागरो, गान्धाराधिपगन्धद्विपकूटपाकलो, लाटपाटवपाटच्चरो मालवलक्ष्मीलतापरशुः ।)

Thus, six kingdoms are mentioned which, if not conquered and subjugated by Prabhākaravardhana, were at least overawed by him. In this way Harsha inherited a kingdom which on the north-west was occupied by the Huṇas, in the west by the Gurjars (Gurjara does not refer to modern Gujarat but to area near the Gujerat District in old Punjab and Sind, now in Pakistan), in the south-west by the Lāṭas (*i.e.* area near Broach in Gujarat) and in the east it touched the Guaḍa empire—roughly corresponding to modern Bengal.

As already stated, Harsha had nearly achieved his immediate goals of avenging the ill-treatment meted out to his sister and the murder of his brother. So far as the former is concerned, the Gauḍa king Śaśānka was actually in occupation of the Maukhari kingdom after killing Rājyaśrī's husband. On his fleeing thence, thanks to the successful attack of Bhaṇḍi and his forces, the

Kanauj throne had fallen vacant. There was another reason for the Gauḍa king to vacate his aggression against Kanauj. He must have heard of the treaty of alliance between Harsha and the king of Kāmarūpa—Bhāskarvarman. Such a combination would leave Gauḍa sandwiched between two powerful forces and he found discretion to be the better part of valour and withdrew from Kanauj.

The kingdom of Kanauj at that time was in a very sad plight. The Maukhari ruler was killed, and the Gauḍa king Śaśānka who had illegally occupied the land had fled leaving behind confusion and chaos. The kingdom needed, a strong ruler who would not only save it from any external aggression but also stabilise it internally by introducing proper administration. The last Maukhari king had left no heir (Grahavarman, Rājyaśrī's husband, was killed). Bāṇa refers to the fact that all "other" relatives had disappeared or rather were liquidated by Gauḍa king. The Maukhari crown could then go to the widow—Rājyaśrī—who was a woman and too young to assume such responsibility. Besides she was determined to embrace the path of renunciation.

It was, therefore, natural that Harsha should be asked to accept the Kanauj crown. The noblemen from Kanauj requested him to be their king. "Rule, then, O Harsha, with glory over the land, conquer the enemies of your country, wash out the insult laid on your kingdom", said the noblemen. Harsha hesitated for a while, partly because he was not sure whether it was right for him to be the king of Kanauj and partly because he was not very confident of everybody's support. But ultimately he decided to accept the throne after consulting Bodhisattva-Avalokiṭeśwara. He, however, called himself only

"Kumāra" and he administered the kingdom—as would appear from the Chinese work "Faug-Chih"—in conjunction with his widowed sister. It appears, however, that the qualms that Harsha may have had in the beginning were not noticeable when he became really powerful, and in due course the kingdoms of Sthāṇvīśvara and Kanauj were not only amalgamated under one ruler, but Harsha actually shifted his capital to Kanauj. There could, of course, be another strategic reason for the shifting of the capital. Sthāṇvīśvara was in a corner and when Harsha's empire stretched itself almost through the whole of Northern India, he must have thought of Kanauj as a more central place. Besides Sthāṇvīśvara was in the north-western part of his newly founded empire and was, in any case, exposed to more attacks from the inimical Huṇas.

Yuan Chwang gives us a rosy picture of how his master "proceeding eastward, invaded the states which had refused allegiance and waged incessant warfare, until in six years he fought the Five Indias". Yuan Chwang does not mention any details of the kingdoms which Harsha conquered. There is also another reference by Yuan Chwang. "He was soon able to avenge the injuries received by his brother and to make himself an absolute Master of India". Yuan Chwang is again quite vague when he says "Śilāditya Mahārāja had subdued nations from east to west and carried his arms to far-off areas." How Harsha did all this and which kingdoms he conquered or subdued or overawed is not clearly indicated. Harsha's other biographer and contemporary, Bāṇa, too, in his overenthusiasm to praise the great Harsha, makes no mention of the details of Harsha's campaigns. There are only references to Harsha being preoccupied in taking

exercises in preparation for the Gauḍa war, or his having "pounded the Sindhu ruler," or to his having got "tributes from an inaccessible land of snowy mountains"—presumably referring to Nepal. Harsha is, besides, referred to as "the lord of four oceans, whose toe-nails are shining with the crest gems of all monarchs" or the kings, sovereign of all continents. All these need not be taken at their face value. Not that there is any doubt as regards the successful wars fought by Harsha, but the extent of Harsha's empire stretched only to northern India and, there too, the western portions of what now are Rajasthan and Sind were not under his sway. On the eastern side, Śaśānka, who ruled what is present Bengal, was not thoroughly defeated since he continues to be referred to as king of Gauḍa as far late as 619 A.D. Then again Kāmarūpa or modern Assam and part of East Bengal were only "friendly" but not "Conquered" by Harsha. For the benefit of readers a rough map showing the extent of Harsha's empire appears at the end of the book.

Let us now turn to Harsha's scheme of conquests.

After defeating Mālava and forcing Śaśānka to run away from the Maukhari domain and after entering into a treaty of friendship with the king of Kāmarūpa (Assam), Harsha had already assumed a position of power *vis-a-vis* the smaller kingdoms that were lying in-between. All these had to concede his superiority and pay tributes to him. Thus from Sthāṇvīsvara in the North West right upto the border of Kāmarūpa, Harsha became supreme. There is a mention of his having attacked Nepal. There are certain Nepalese inscriptions in which the Nepal King is described as a mere Sāmanta and Yuan Chwang has referred to him as a "recent king". In Nepal the Harsha

era had been started presumably after Harsha went and conquered Nepal. Bāṇa in his *Harshacharitam*, refers to Harsha having exacted tributes from Nepal, an "inaccessible country of snowy mountains." (अत्र परमेश्वरेण तुषारशैलभुवो दुर्गायागृहीत: कर:). There is no record anywhere, however, to show precisely when exactly Harsha attacked Nepal, how he fared in the war and what the exact conclusion of the fight was. All that Bāṇa says is that Harsha collected taxes from a difficult and inaccessible snowy land. Some interpret Bāṇa's words "Durgayah grhitah Karah (दुर्गाया गृहीत: कर:) as standing for "accepted the hand of Durgā in marriage." There seems, however, not much to support the view that Harsha married a Himalayan princess. All that we know is that Harsha fought bloody wars in the east and the west, in the north and the south, and subjugated "Five Indias."

In the course of his triumphant march Harsha brought Magadha under his control. Yuan Chwang tells us of a king called Pūrṇa-Varman who was the last descendant of the great Aśoka and who lived in the beginning of the 7th century. This king brought back to life the Bodhi Tree (implying that he re-established the Budha religion) which had been cut down by Śaśānka. After Pūrṇa-Varman's death, it appears that the kingdom passed to Harsha. Chinese documents refer to Harsha as "king of Magadha". Yuan Chwang also refers to Śilāditya (*i.e.* Harsha) having constructed a bronze temple at Nālandā where Harsha's seals also were discovered.

Harsha seems to have attacked and subjugated what was known as Wu-tu or modern Orissa in the later stages of his career. At the time of Yuan Chwang's arrival in this part, it is stated that it was under the control of the

King of Kanauj *i.e.* Harsha. He seems to have made Wu-tu a strong frontier outpost. After the subjugation of Kongonda (corresponding to modern Ganjam District) it is stated that Śilāditya (*i.e.* Harsha) camped in Wu-tu for a little while and gave as a gift to Jayasena "the revenue of eighty big villages."

As already stated, Harsha had a treaty of alliance with the king of Kāmarūpa (Assam). According to Yuan Chwang "the reigning king—who was a Brahmin named Bhāskarvarman, alias Kumāra—was a successor to the kingdom which was in the family for a thousand generations". This must obviously be gross exaggeration. Bhāskaravarman was, however, worried about the growing prestige of his immediate neighbour, Śaśānka, who, incidentally, had treacherously slain Rājyavardhana. The offer of friendly alliance made by Bhāskaravarman, who sent an emissary with costly gifts to Harsha, could have been impelled by fear of the neighbour. Anyway, both Harsha and Bhāskaravarman, fared well as a result of their newly formed friendship. That was a friendship of two equals, even though Bāṇa refers to the Kāmarūpa King being annointed by Harsha (अत्र देवेन अभिषिक्तः मारः), thereby implying that Harsha was vastly superior. Bāṇa is perhaps not referring to Bhāskaravarman's Abhiṣeka but that of another friend of Harsha *viz.* Mādhavagupta, whom Harsha had placed in charge of the Magadha kingdom.

There is another incident connected with Harsha in which both the king of Kāmarūpa and also Yuan Chwang do not appear in a bright light. Harsha is said to have sent for the Chinese pilgrim who was staying with the Kāmarūpa king, Bhāskaravarman. But Harsha got the

reply that he could rather "take the pilgrim's head" *i.e.* if he dared to do so. Harsha is said to have replied back to say that he would arrange to take only the head. The story goes on to say that it is after this—*i.e.* after realising Harsha's strength—that friendship between the two kings was formed. But this has no meaning because Yuan Chwang visited Harsha's court in 643 while the treaty of alliance was signed over thirty years earlier.

Thus after vanquishing all foes, and with a firmly established friendship with the Assam king, Harsha's influence extended to the whole of northern India from the Punjab to Bengal. But his thirst for conquest was still not quenched. He now decided to turn west and then to the south. The area south of the Vindhyas was ruled by a Maharashtrian king named Pulakeśī II. This king had already firmly established himself and was a real danger to Harsha's ambitions. Pulakeśī II refused to give allegiance to Harsha who was by now rather over-confident of his powers. But Pulakeśī II who had rightly styled himself as the "Lord of the whole region of the South" (दक्षिणापथपृथ्व्या: स्वामी) was more than Harsha's equal.

Pulakeśī II had inherited a large kingdom stretching from the Vindhyas in the north right up to the borders of the Pallava kingdom in the south. He had already defeated the rulers of Gujarat and Kalingas. The war with Harsha was fought probably in 634 A.D. It is referred to in the inscriptions of 636 A.D., and Pulakeśī II has been referred to therein as the conqueror of Harsha or one who made joy disappear from Harsha's face (हर्षविच्छेद-हेतु: ।) ; also "envious because Harsha's troops of elephants

were killed and he whose feet were covered with gems in the heads of chiefs (who bowed before him) was caused to have his joy melted away". (अपरिमितविभूति-स्फीतसामन्त सेनामुकुटमणिमयूखाक्रान्तपादारविन्दो युधि पतितगजेन्द्रानिकवि-भ्रत्सभूतो भयगलितहर्षो येन चाकारि हर्षः।) Pulakeśī II, the Chalukya king, had further acquired the title "Parameśvara". The defeat of Harsha's armies by the brave Maharashtrian king in the 7th century is a bright page in the history of old Maharashtra. It also halted Harsha's march from success to success.

Yuan Chwang gives the impression that Harsha fought all his wars in the first six years (*i.e.* from 606 to 612 A.D.) and thereafter lived in peace for 30 years. His exact words transliterated from the Chinese text are "Chui San shihnien ping ko pu chi"...The word "Chui" is interpreted to mean "don the imperial robe".

The Chinese pilgrim arrived in Harsha's court in 636 A.D. What Yuan Chwang really means is that when he arrived, peace was reigning in Harsha's kingdom. It is quite clear that Harsha continued to wage wars at least right up to 643 A.D. when he conquered Koṅgoda (modern Ganjam district). This in spite of the fact that before turning South, Harsha had undertaken a campaign in the western part of India. Yuan Chwang has recorded that the Valabhi King, Dhruvasena, was a man of hasty nature and of shallow views. His main quality was faith in Buddhism. Harsha defeated him in an open war, but treated him well thereafter. This was obviously because he wanted to use Valabhi against the Chalukya king, the powerful Pulakeśī II. Harsha, therefore, reinstated Dhruvasena on the throne and it is also said that Harsha gave his daughter in marriage to him. It seems clear that

this was a political marriage. Anyway, Harsha attacked Pulakeśī II after well guarding the western front. As stated earlier, in spite of this, his campaign against Pulakeśī II failed. Still one must admit that Harsha was a master strategist. His pact of friendship with Kāmarūpa resulted in his easy victory against the Gauḍa king who immediately fled back into his own territory leaving the Maukhari throne at Kanauj for Harsha. With the defeat of and subsequent compromise with the Valabhi king, he at least ensured that Pulakeśī II would not enter Harsha's domains *via* the Valabhi kingdom. Unfortunately for Harsha, however, Pulakeśī II proved too good for him and Harsha was unable to make inroads into the strong empire built by Pulakeśī II who had by then become the lord of the entire southern India, just as Harsha was of most of northern India.

It was probably after this defeat that Harsha decided to lead a peaceful life. He was accepted as a great monarch by all, big and small, in the region to the north of Vindhyas. Harsha sent an ambassador—a Brahmin envoy —to the court of the Chinese king Tai Taung in 641 A.D. China's unofficial representative—Yuan Chwang—was already in India visiting various kingdoms.

All these conquests were possible because of a powerful army consisting of elephants, horses, chariots and infantry (हस्त्यश्वरथपदाति). With an initial army of 5000 elephants, 2000 horses and 50,000 infantry, Harsha strengthened his forces immensely by raising as many as 60,000 elephants and 100,000 horses. Bāṇa called on Harsha at the king's invitation and has given a graphic account of what he saw and heard. His description of Darpaśāta, Harsha's favourite elephant, runs into pages.

The elephants were acquired as tribute from kings whom he had defeated on battlefield or were received as presents. His cavalry was full of horses brought from several countries like Vanāyu, Āraṭṭa, Kamboja, Bhārdwaja, Sindhu and Iran. Bāṇa has also given details of the staff employed to keep this force in trim and ready to go into battle. These were Kaṭuka, Nālivāhaka, Vallabha-Pāla, Anāyatta, Hasti, Pārśvarakśin, Ghatika, etc.

IV

HARSHA'S ADMINISTRATION

In the old forms of Government, all power vested with the king. He was not only the legal arbiter of all that went in his name, but he, in fact, wielded all authority except to the extent delegated expressly by him to officials. He was the supreme court of appeal and he fixed the taxation laws and exemptions. He was the Head of the army in all its four forms known then *viz.* Elephants (हस्ती),Cavalry (अश्व),Chariots(रथ) and Infantry (पदाति) He was besides the supreme religious head.

Considering these onerous tasks, the king had to exert himself all the year round, all the hours of the day. According to Yuan Chwang, "Harsha's day was divided into three parts, of which one was given to administration and the other two to religious works. He was indefatigable and the day was too short for him". But this does not mean that Harsha remained in his palace all the time. He actually went out of headquarters quite often. Says Yuan Chwang, "If there was any irregularity in the manners of the people of the cities, he went amongst them". He made visits of inspection throughout his dominions, not residing long at any one place but having temporary buildings erected for his residence at each place of halt. He did not, however, go out during the three months of the rainy season. All these temporary royal residences used to be made for Buddhist monks and Brahmins. Harsha's idea was to hold the scales of justice evenly and to "punish the wrongdoers and

reward those who are good". When Yuan Chwang first met Harsha, the latter was visiting different parts of the empire and was camping at a place in far-off Bengal. The Bānskherā and Madhuban Plates also mention places away from headquarters where Harsha camped. This shows that according to Yuan Chwang, Harsha was not a king given to comforts and luxury but continuously strove for the good of his subjects.

Yuan Chwang tells us how the king's day was divided into three parts and how indefatigable he was. He forgot sleep and food in his devotionto work. Bāṇa too hasgiven a graphic description of the way the king functioned. As already stated, Bāṇa was invited by Harsha for an interview —in fact to answer a charge against him. He went to meet the king in his camp on the bank of river Ajarāvatī. To meet the king was not easy because there were several others equally anxious to meet Harsha. And Bāṇa saw there hostiles who were since conquered—as also famous vassals of the king staying in camps waiting to get an opportunity to meet the great king (प्रख्यातानां क्षितिभुजां बहून् शिबिरसंनिवेशान् वीक्षमाणः ।). They were waiting there for the whole day—some of them at least—to get a chance to have audience with the king.

Bāṇa passed through three courts crowded with small kings and it was only when he reached the fourth court that he saw his monarch—Harsha. There the Mālava Prince was seated beside him.

Even after making allowance for the gross exaggeration in which Bāṇa usually indulges, one is considerably impressed by the description of the king sitting in a mere camp. If this was the luxury in which he found Harsha "camping" near a river, what grandeur must there be in the

palace itself, of which unfortunately we do not have details from Bāṇa's pen. He has given a general description of the old capital of Sthāṇvīsvara which was resounding with commerce and trade, had a market street, with a palace whose walls were white coloured.

Harsha, as an emperor, has been described by Bāṇa as bathing in golden vessels and one who gave gifts to Brahmins—utensils made of costly stones or gold. His foot—stools were golden and it appears that the entire luxurious paraphernalia was carried with the king whenever he went on tour.

Local chieftains were permitted by Harsha to exercise authority provided they paid an annual tribute. Harsha also made it a condition that they attend conferences or assembly whenever he called them. The idea was that the local chieftains should not be made to feel that they have become independent. This is one of the tests of an efficient central administration. While it should give maximum powers to local heads to function in their well-defined spheres of administration, a feeling should not be permitted to develop among them that the centre is weak and local rulers are free to do what they like. Harsha used to hold such conferences regularly and Yuan Chwang has recorded that in one religious assembly held by Harsha as many as eighteen tributary princes as also the King of Valabhi and the King of Kāmarūpa were present. The last two had a treaty of friendship with Harsha. These chieftains, or rather Governors, appointed in all border areas are referred to by Bāṇa, too, in his *Harshacharitam* wherein he says that "he, the protector of all peoples, appointed protectors in all directions" (अत्र लोकनाथेन दिशां मुखेषु परिकल्पिता लोकपाला: ।).

Nearer home, *i.e.* in the capital itself, there used to be a chain of officials which Bāṇa has mentioned in his *Harshacharitam*. There, of course, was a Principal or Chief Minister who headed a council of other Ministers. Bhaṇḍin has been mentioned as Rājyavardhana's Chief Adviser who had convened a meeting of such advisers on getting the news of Rājyavardhana's death at the hands of the Gauḍa king. Bāṇa quotes Bhaṇḍin as having said :

"The destiny of the kingdom is to be fixed just now. The old king and his son are dead. His brother is affectionate and his nature—given by God—is to be dutiful and obedient. The subjects will surely have faith in him. I, therefore, suggest that he assumes the royal responsibility. Let, however, each one give his opinion on the matter".

This passage which shows how the people's representatives had the real power in their hands even in those days can be taken out and put into the mouth of the British Prime Minister. The society over which Harsha and his predecessors ruled was so advanced that the other ministers too expressed their views very frankly and they unanimously requested Harsha to accept the crown. Besides Bhaṇḍin, Bāṇa has also mentioned the name of Avanti as Harsha's supreme Minister for the prosecution of war. Then mentioned by name is also Siṁhanāda who was the Commander-in-Chief. He was treated by the king with great respect mainly because he was his father's trusted employee. Bāṇa has mentioned that when Harsha took the vow of taking revenge against the Gauḍa king, he touched the feet of Siṁhanāda. Then there is mention of Kuntala as chief of cavalry and of Skandagupta as chief commandant of the elephant force.

There used to be besides several officials, duties of each of whom were defined. These were—

(i) Supreme Minister of Peace and War : (महासंधिनिग्रहाधिकृत). This post was held, as already mentioned above, by Avanti in Harsha's regime.

(ii) Katuka (कटुकः) or Chief Commandant of the elephant force. This post—as already stated—was given to Skandagupta.

(iii) Army Commander (महाबलाधिकृतः)

(iv) Junior Army Commander (बलाधिकृतः)

(v) Chief of House Regiment or Cavalry (बृहदश्ववारः)

(vi) Superintendents of soldiers' Barrack (पाठीपतिः)

(vii) An officer who deals with other kingdoms—a foreign secretary or something (राज़स्थानीयः)

(viii) A Provincial Governor (उपरिकः)

(ix) A District Officer (विषयपतिः)

(x) A Judge (प्रमात्रीऽ)

(xi) Revenue Officer, rather like a tehasildar (भोगिक or भोगपतिः) and so on.

There are so many other such designations elaborately worked out. This shows that the system of administration under Harsha was of a very advanced order.

According to the inscriptions of Harsha, the entire kingdom was divided into several divisions and small units. These were :

(i) Province or a Division (भुक्ति). The Madhuban Plate mentions Srāvasti. Bhukti or the Province of Sravasti.

(ii) A small division thereof known as a District (विषयः). The Kundadhani Viṣaya is mentioned in the Madhuban Plate.

(iii) A still smaller territorial unit of the size of present

Tehasil or Taluka called Paṭhaka (पठक).

(iv) The smallest unit was of course a village or Grama (ग्रामः).

Yuan Chwang records to say that "As the Government is generous, official requirements are few. Families are not registered and individuals are not subject to forced labour. Taxation is light and every one keeps to his hereditary occupation and attends to his patrimony". The main source of revenue was the traditional one-sixth of the produce and customs like light duties at the ferries and barrier stations paid by the tradesmen who went to and fro bartering their merchandise". Some other taxes mentioned were *tulyameya i.e.* tax depending on weight or measure and Bhāga-bhog-kara-Niranyādi *i.e.* share of the enjoyment of produce or cash payments or other incomes. The last one was perhaps a kind of sales tax and transfer of property tax.

Harsha had also a fairly well worked out method of spending the revenue. Naturally in those days Government spending was on a few items only. Yuan Chwang tells us that Harsha had a broad four-fold division of his expenditure.

"Of the royal land, one part is for the expenses of Government and State worship, one for the endowment of the public servants, one to reward high intellectual eminence and one for acquiring religious merit by gifts to various sects". One is really surprised at the well thought-out plan of spending. The four broad budget-heads showed how the king cared both for the material and the spiritual upliftment of his subjects.

There is not much on record as regards how crime was dealt with. Yuan Chwang, however, testifies to Harsha's

excellent administration to say "As the Government is honestly administered and the people live together on good terms the criminal class is small". Yuan Chwang, however, in spite of what he has recorded, had himself to face bandits more than once. Once he was kidnapped and actually taken away for being treated as an offering to God—but was luckily saved.

It cannot, however, be said, whatever Yuan Chwang has to emphasise, that there was no crime at all in those days. This statement should be taken to mean that the incidence of crime was not very high firstly because religion and fear of God weighed considerably with men, who were therefore afraid of committing crimes and consequently facing a miserable life in the next birth and secondly, because the punishment meted out to wrongdoers was almost always deterrent. Yuan Chwang, however, pays a round compliment to Indian character when he says that "they will not take anything wrongfully and they yield more than fairness requires. They fear the retribution for sins in other lives and make light of what conduct produces in this life. They do not practice deceit and they keep their sworn obligations". In modern times, with the refined ideas of jurisprudence imbibed by man, the tendency is to "reform" rather than "take revenge" against a criminal. A sentence is, therefore, administered not to serve as a deterrent but to serve as a corrective, both to the criminal and to others. During Harsha's time, however, as in the Middle Ages in Europe, ordinary violation of rules or laws often led to life-imprisonment ; then again the cutting of a nose or an ear or a hand as a measure of punishment was not uncommon. A person could also be banished from the

entire kingdom for what we may now consider a petty offence. At the same time, on festive or ceremonial occasions, it was not uncommon to order a general amnesty. Bāṇa has referred to prisoners with a thick growth of hair on their faces looking like relatives of the Kali age that was disappearing, moving about in confusion after being released from prisons, the king having ordered the release on the birth of his second son, *viz.* Harsha. (प्रलम्बश्मश्रु जालजटिलाननानि बहलमलपङ्ककलङ्क-कालकायानि नश्यतः कलिकालस्य बान्धवकुलानीवाकुलानि अधावन्त मुक्तानि बन्धनवृन्दानि ।)

Punishment in the form of a fine was also in vogue. Similarly voluntary submission to a particular form of ordeal in order to prove one's innocence was an accepted mode of determining a man's guilt or otherwise. The dreaded practice of Sati (a woman killing herself by jumping into her husband's funeral pyre) was common in those days. A chaste woman whose husband was dead and had nothing to look forward to in the world preferred to jump on to the funeral pyre of her husband. Queen Yaśomati killed herself in this way following Prabhākaravardhana's death. Rājyaśrī—Harsha's younger sister—in desperation was about to mount the funeral pyre when in the nick of time Harsha saved her. Rājyavardhana was probably unmarried; at least there is no record of his widow having practised Sati.

Even in those old days, in a vast kingdom like Harsha's, there were bound to be big cities, smaller towns and villages. The capital was, of course, the most important and most prosperous city. Even then from what we know from Yuan Chwang it appears that even in big cities "the streets and lanes were tortuous, the roads winding.

The main roads too were dirty."

After Harsha shifted his capital from Sthāṇviśvara, Kanauj became the principal town not only in his domain, but the most important city in the whole of India. It was then from Kanauj that all streams of activity whether cultural or educational or religious began to flow. Kanauj eclipsed Pāṭaliputra, which was the Magadha capital. Kanauj spread over an area of about five miles by one and a quarter mile. After the fashion of those days it was a walled city and had within it storeyed structures. There were beautiful gardens and tanks full of clean water. There were a few more important cities at that time, besides Kanauj and Pāṭaliputra. Benares or Vārāṇasī had for long been the stronghold of Hindu religion. Yuan Chwang with his bias for Buddhism, however, refers to the town as then inhabited by "unbelievers". Even in the 7th century, as now, Vārāṇasī was full of temples and halls with sculpture and wooden engravings. Ujjayinī which had till recently been the capital of Guptas was still an important seat of learning. The Jantar Mantar at Ujjain built then is still famous. The city had magnificient palaces. In Meghaduta, poet Kalidāsa puts this in the Yakasha's mouth: "O cloud, while proceeding northwards, even though Ujjayinī is out of your way, do not miss that famous town". (वक्रः पन्थां यदपि भवतः प्रास्थितस्योत्तराशां सौध्रोत्सर्गप्रणयविमुखो मा स्म भूरुज्जयिन्याः ।) It was indeed an important town in Harsha's time too. Then there was Mathurā, which had seen Lord Krishna grow up in his young days and which now became a Buddhist city. There were many other cities referred to by Yuan Chwang. In Southern India, one of the famous cities was Kānchī.

Yuan Chwang has given a detailed description of Kanauj as a town. He says that Ka-no-ku-she or Kanyakubja was 4000 li in circuit. It was very strongly defended and had lofty structures everywhere. There were beautiful gardens and tanks of clear water, and in it varieties of items of interest from strange lands were collected. The inhabitants were well off and there were families with great wealth; fruit and flowers were abundant and sowing and reaping had their seasons. The people had a refined appearance and dressed in glossy silk attire. They were given to learning and the arts and were clear in discourse. They were equally divided between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. There were above 100 Buddhist monasteries with more than 10,000 Brethern who were students of both the "vehicles" (Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna). There were more than 200 Deva temples and the non-Buddhists were several thousand in number. Yuan Chwang has also described the Indian cities which he saw as he went along. Cities no doubt had huge buildings with halls and terraced belvederes. These were whitewashed and had tiled roofs. They used to be quite high, while the common people's houses were made of bricks or even boards and their floors smeared with cow-dung. (Even today in villages in parts of India cow-dung is used to give a smooth surface to the otherwise rugged flooring). On the whole the common man's dwellings too were comfortable though simple and as observed by Yuan Chwang "economical outside but sumptuous inside". In *Harshacharitam* there is a reference to the palace being painted with murals or auspicious scenes and workers riding ladders with brushes in their hands and plaster buckets on their shoulders whitening the top wall of the palace at the time of Rājyaśri's

marriage. (उत्कूर्चकरैश्च सुधाकर्करस्कन्धैः आधिरोहिणीसमारूढैः धवैः धवलीक्रियमाणप्रासादप्रतोलीप्राकारशिखरम् ।)

About the citizens of Kanauj Yuan Chwang says : "They are pre-eminently explicit and correct in speech, their expressions being harmonious and elegant, like those of the Devas and their intonation clear and distinct serving as rule and pattern for others".

We have seen how Harsha governed most of northern India very ably. When Yuan Chwang visited his court there was peace in the empire. To be able to maintain peace in such a huge kingdom requires a thoroughly efficient administration. It is not the pomp and splendour that is exhibited by the rich in cities and towns that decides whether an administration is running smoothly. For that one has to see what is happening in far off districts and small towns and villages. Harsha knew the secret of good government and that is: the rulers must have continuous contact with the ruled—not the kind of contact that is maintained by reading the reports submitted by a Chief Minister and other senior deputies. That contact had to be personal. A direct approach to villages by the king made the subjects feel that they were being looked after. King Harsha's village administration is not described as such by either Bāṇa or by Yuan Chwang. But we can get glimpses of it in *Harshacharitam*.

In our present-day revenue administration, inherited from the British, we have a system of detailed records of village life. There are several "village forms" which the Patwari has to maintain month after month. These forms which are periodically checked by higher officers like the Collector give detailed information about all that goes to make the village. Harsha's administration also had a

system of maintenance of records. There was actually a separate department of Records and Archives. Bāṇa describes how while the king was passing through a village the Patwari (अक्षपटलिक) and other village officers (करणी) bowed before the king and requested him: "Let your Majesty confer his new commands on us". The Akṣapaṭalika then brought forth a gold seal for inscribing the royal command with the appropriate seal.

That there was a democracy, though in a rudimentary form, operating at the higher level is already mentioned. It was the Council of Ministers and Advisers that decided and urged upon Harsha to accept the crown. Even at lower levels there used to be an administrator (विषयपतिः) who had a body of men to advise him. There were, depending on the area where the Viṣayapati was discharging his duties, the town mayor or Nagara-Śreṣṭhin, a representative of trade and commerce (सार्थवाहः), another representing the arts and crafts (प्रथमकुलिक), one representing writers and authors (प्रथमकायस्थ).

In the Madhuban Plate there is a reference to Harsha giving a gift to Brahmins in the presence of these non-officials.

There used to be some kind of periodical census. There is no clear record of Harsha having ordered it but there is a reference to his contemporary and rival—Pulakeśī II —the great Maharashtrian king—having divided his empire into there broad divisions comprising 99,000 villages.

That there were royal seals is already referred to. Some of these have been discovered, though in fragments. The inscriptions on them are mutilated, but those which can be deciphered can be understood to have referred to Harsha as "the highest king, almost like the Lord, the great

Bhaṭṭāraka, the great king of kings, Shri Harsha." Every letter is not clearly legible but we can imagine the missing letters and read it as [(परम) माहेश्वर: महेश्वर एव सार्व (भौम:) । (परमभ) ट्टारक: महाराजाधिराज श्री हर्ष: ।]

The portions shown in small brackets are missing.

That metal coins were in vogue during Harsha's time has been amply proved. Some coins belonging to the pre-Harsha period as also the Harsha period have been found. Coins in the name of "Pratāpaśala"—nine in number—all made of silver—have been discovered. There are besides coins in the name of Saladatta which probably stands for Śilāditya and one of Harsha. On that coin is inscribed "Shri Śilāditya, the conquerer and master of the universe, conquers heaven" (विजयतां अवनिपति: श्रीशिलादित्यो दिवं जयति ।)

There are descriptions of the dress of men and women. Yuan Chwang described men's dress thus: "The men wind a strip of cloth round the waist and upto the armpits and leave the right shoulder bare. The women wear a long robe which covers both shoulders and falls down loose." Women did not observe purdah—Rājyaśrī has not been referred to by Bāṇa as wearing one either before or after marriage, or even after she became a widow. Women belonging to the higher strata of society received some education. Even if she had not attended a school, Rājyaśrī is described by Bāṇa as receiving discourses from the Buddhist sage Divākaramitra. Widowed Rājyaśrī had decided to take to the robes of a Sanyāsinī, but Harsha spoke to her some assuring words and so did the Buddhist priest. Rājyaśrī was cultured enough to fully grasp and appreciate their advice. Besides, in the earlier chapter Rājyaśrī is described by Bāṇa as having received

instruction in dancing and music. There is plenty of contemporary literature available to show that women did receive substantial education in the various arts. In Bāṇa's other famous work *Kādambarī* as also in the plays written by King Harsha himself, there is evidence to support this.

There is ample evidence available regarding the imparting of education in general. For a country to be called educated, it is not enough that it produces a few scholars, or men of letters who make a stamp not only on contemporary society but also on generations to come. It is the rare privilege of India to have produced a great poet like Kālidasa. Over a period of centuries, one notices a galaxy of writers whose fame glows to this day, not only in India but far and wide. Goethe, the German philosopher and writer, got into a rapturous mood after he read the *Śākuntalam*, and was prepared to call whatever was beautiful in the world thus: "I call thee Śākuntalā." But, as stated above, it is not only in the number of great poets that India can claim cultural distinction but in the existence, as in Harsha's times, of universities which imparted varied education to pupils. Even from times immemorial, the study of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas, of the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇas, the Sutras and Bhagavadgitā was almost compulsory. But this kind of education was then confined only to Brahmins or the Dwijas. With the advent of Buddhism, education became far more broad-based and began to trickle down to the lower strata of society.

The famous university at Nālandā (in Bihar) is a case in point. Yuan Chwang has given us such detailed description of how the university functioned that one is

tempted to quote him. Says he, "The students undergoing instruction numbered several thousands. They are men of the highest ability and talent. Their distinction is very great. There are hundreds amongst them whose reputation has spread through distant regions. Their conduct is pure and unblameable. They follow in sincerity the precepts of moral law. The rules of the convent are severe and all the priests are bound to observe them. The day is not sufficient for asking and answering questions. From morn to night, they engage in discussion, the old and the young help each other. Learned people from different cities who desire to acquire renown in discussion come in hundreds to settle their doubts and then the streams of their wisdom spread far and wide. For this reason, some people usurp the name (of Nālandā University) and going to and fro, receive honour in consequence. One must have studied deeply both old and new books before getting admission. Those students, therefore, who come up here as strangers have to show their ability by hard discussion. Those who fail as compared to those who succeed, are seven or eight to ten. Those of conspicuous talent, solid learning, great ability, illustrious virtue' were distinguished men, belonging to the college, such as Dhamapāla (धम्मपाल) or Chandrapāla (चन्द्रपाल) ; Guṇamati and Sthiramati, the streams of whose popular teachings spread abroad even now, Prabhāmitra with his clear discourses, Jinamitra with his exalted eloquence, Śīlabhadra and other eminent men whose names have been lost."

There is information about this University not only recorded by Yuan Chwang himself, but also in his *Life*. The university was established by Śakrāditya. A long succession of kings continued the work on the buildings

using all the skill of the sculptor till the whole thing became marvellous to behold. The university had a large income. During the times of Harsha, it had the revenue of two hundred villages.

Eager students not only from the other parts of India but from other countries too flocked to this university. As a matter of fact, during the times of Harsha, India had become an important centre of education for the entire world. Yuan Chwang himself preferred to be registered as a student when Śīlabhadra was its head. He tells us that "in beginning the education of children and winning them over they were taught a book of twelve chapters called *Siddhavastu*. When children were seven years old, the five sciences (विद्या) were gradually communicated to them. These consisted of grammar, which taught and explained words and classified their distinction. The second was skilled professions concerned with mechanical arts, the science of causes and astrology. The third was the science of medicine. The fourth was the science of reasoning. The fifth was the science of the inner soul (आत्मविद्या).

Regarding Harsha's political relations, the facts are well known. All the kings who were either conquered or had voluntarily surrendered, of course, remained as his vassals, either out of fear or out of respect. He kept a complete check over them while at the same time, conceding some kind of provincial autonomy. Harsha established political relations outside India too. Mention has already been made of his having sent a Brahmin as an ambassador to China. This could be to counterblast a similar ambassadorial assignment given to one of his diplomats by Pulakeśī II. The latter was the "Lord of the

entire South" just as Harsha was of northern India. Pulakeśī II had established diplomatic relations with Persia. Both these envoys, representing the two great kings, must have travelled by sea. Sea voyages were not uncommon then. That there used to be regular sea trips to and from Ceylon is already well known. In Harsha's own play—Ratnāvalī—the heroine gets into trouble as a result of a ship-wreck while travelling from Ceylon to Kauśāmbī. Even a couple of centuries earlier another Chinese traveller Fa-hien went by sea to Ceylon, thence to Java, and from there to Kwang Chow. The ship which took him was big enough to carry 200 passengers. When Yuan Chwang was about to depart and go back to his country after a fifteen-year stay in India, Harsha offered to send an envoy with him if Yuan Chwang decided to go by sea. This implied that Harsha's navy could handle the sea route very easily. Even during the earlier Gupta period, India had established a sea-borne trade with the East Indies. It is on record that as many as 5000 Indians representing various professions and vocations had gone to Java to settle in that country.

A few years after Harsha's death yet another Chinese traveller called I-tsing came to India. He came from China to India by sea. He changed ship on the way and ultimately came to the "Land of naked people" (probably some island in the Andaman group) from where he set sail and straight disembarked after fifteen days at the port of Tāmralipti. He has kept a record of his return voyage too. "Sailing back from Tāmralipti two months in the South East we came to Ka-Cha."

Besides being used for trade and for settling families in far-off countries, the ships also carried men who ex-

changed ideas. There are remains even today of Indian art in the South-East Asian countries. Most of these works were made in and around the 7th century—the time of Harsha. Indian art, Indian culture and Buddhism—the religion which was born in India—spread to far-off countries during the times of Harsha. No wonder, therefore, that the period of Harsha is considered as one of the most glorious periods of Indian history.

V

HARSHA'S RELIGION

HARSHA was a Buddhist when he reached the height of his glory. There are two difficulties in determining his religion: firstly with regard to the exact stage of his life when he embraced Buddhism; and secondly, how deep he was in that religion. We have to look to Yuan Chwang for supplying the answers. But one should not forget that Yuan Chwang was a staunch Buddhist who had come to India to study the religion and was himself quite naturally biased towards it. He saw everything from the Buddhist point of view. For example, he refers to Vārānaśī (Benaras) which was (and even is today) the centre of Hindu culture as a 'city of unbelievers'. This he felt because that city was a seat of learning and was the heart of Brahmanism.

This does not mean, however, that Yuan Chwang's account should be dismissed as unreliable. All that should be remembered is that when we base our conclusions on the data furnished by him, we should eliminate what would appear to be exaggerations in favour of the Buddhist creed. There is also another point to remember. Yuan Chwang came to India in 630 A.D. He actually visited Harsha's court some twelve years later. At that time, Harsha must have been a convert to Buddhism. Even then one must say that Harsha was not as deep in Buddhism as, for instance, Aśoka was. The latter was disgusted with warfare and decided to lead a thoroughly peaceful life after seeing for himself what

horrors war brings on the people. Harsha, on the other hand, not only waged wars in all directions, but continued to do so during the major part of his career. His attack on Kongoda region (Ganjam District), for instance, was made only a few years before his death *i.e.* in 643 A.D. Yuan Chwang, perhaps to prove Harsha's pacifist role, has indicated that it was only in the first five or six years of his reign that Harsha waged wars, and that after having conquered the "world" he led a peaceful reign for thirty years. In other words, from 612 to 642 A.D. (*i.e.* a period of 30 years before Yuan Chwang arrived in Harsha's court). Harsha remained peaceful, devoted to Buddhist ideals and did not wage wars. This is quite at variance with what actually happened. The fight with Pulakeśī II or with the Valabhi king took place much later than 612—probably in the year 635 A.D. or thereabout. Then again, Śaśānka, the king of Gauḍa, was, no doubt, made to flee from the forcibly usurped Maukhari throne by Harsha. But Śaśānka was by no means eliminated completely, because it is on record that he was flourishing as a rather powerful king as late as in 619 A.D. His final defeat at the hands of Harsha must have taken place in the twenties of the seventh century. Yuan Chwang's account of Harsha "having reigned in peace for thirty years without raising a weapon" appears unduly biased or is perhaps wrongly translated from the original version in the Chinese language. It could mean, as Beal has interpreted: "After thirty years his arms reposed and he governed thereafter in peace".

Here it must be remembered that Harsha was not born in a Buddhist family. His forefathers were "worshippers of the sun". Bāṇa has described Harsha's father—

Prabhākaravardhana—as "kneeling eastwards upon the ground in a circle smeared with saffron paste" and that "he was by virtue a devotee of the sun-God" (निसर्गत एव नृपतिरादित्यभक्तो बभूव ... प्रतिदिनमुदये ... प्राङ्मुख: ... स्वहृदयेनेव सूर्यानुरक्तेन रक्तकमलषण्डेन अर्चां ददौ।). That Prabhākaravardhana was a sun worshipper is also corroborated by inscriptions in the Madhuban and Bānskherā Plates. He is described there as a great devotee of the Sun God (परमादित्यभक्त). So were his father (whose very name was Ādityavardhana) and his grandfather.

Besides being sun worshippers, the family was devoted to Lord Śiva. There is ample evidence to support this in Bāṇa's *Harshacharitam*. In the Sonepat Copper Seal we see a reclining Nandi which is Lord Śiva's carrier (वाहन). These and other sources of evidence establish clearly that Harsha by birth, as also in his younger days, was under the influence of the Hindu religion or Brahmanism as opposed to Buddhism. There is no clear evidence as regards when he got converted to Buddhism. There could not have been a formal ceremony in which one converted oneself from Brahmanism to Buddhism; but his later actions show that he was a devotee of Buddha and to that extent Yuan Chwang is right.

It must be remembered that Lord Buddha established his religion as far back as five centuries before the birth of Christ. Even though India saw its birth, it spread far and wide across India's frontiers to China, East Indies, Ceylon and other South East Asian countries. During Aśoka's time Buddhism got a big fillip in the whole of India. But one must not forget that Brahmanism, throughout the centuries, continued to hold its sway over

the Indian mind. Harsha's conversion to Buddhism did not, affect Hindu thought as formulated by the Vedas, Upaniṣads and the Bhagavadgīta. Usually, converts to religion are more fanatical than those who are born in the religion. Harsha, however, was not at all a fanatic. Even after embracing Buddhism while doing public worship, he continued to honour the Brahmanical deities like Siva or Āditya (*i.e.* Sun). He continued to treat Brahmin priests with honour along with Buddhist Bhikkus. Yuan Chwang has recorded that Harsha had introduced the custom of providing viands for 500 Brahmins every day along with 1000 Buddhists at the royal lodges during his tours to the various parts of his domain.

Harsha's inclination towards Buddhism, however, must have commenced quite early in his life. After the death of his father, closely followed by that of his elder brother and the murder of his sister's husband, he must have felt very dejected. It was in a spirit of duty that he started his campaign first to avenge his brother's death and then to recover his lost sister. The state of his mind—when he got the news that his sister had escaped from prison and had taken resort to the Vindhya forest—must be imagined. At that time, he left the fighting to his general, Bhaṇḍin, and he himself went in search of his widowed sister. While wandering from place to place in the forest, he got the information that there was a sage called Divākaramitra who was a convert from Brahmanism to Buddhism. While he was at Divākaramitra's hermitage he got the further news that his sister was about to burn herself. Harsha must have been overwhelmed by emotion when he at last recovered his sister. But the impact of

these happenings made him a devotee of Divākaramitra, who lost no time in presenting to Harsha a necklace named Mandākinī. When Rājyaśrī expressed a desire to take to red robes, it was Divākaramitra whose name was suggested by him as Rājyaśrī's preceptor. All these happenings must have attracted Harsha towards Buddhism and the attraction increased more and more in the years to follow.

When Lord Buddha established his religion he must have had precious little idea that his teachings would be interpreted differently by different disciples—if not during his life-time, in the years to follow. In fact such a thing happens to any new school of thought started by any great man. Divisions and sub-divisions and sub-sub-divisions of the original line of thinking is the fate of all philosophical thinkings. In the course of centuries Buddhism too got divided into as many as eighteen sects. Of these, four really formed the main broad divisions. These were (1) The Sautrāntikas, (2) The Vaibhāṣikas, (3) The Yogāchāras and (4) The Mādhyamikas. The first two were grouped under the heading Hīnayāna and the last two under Mahāyāna. The Hīnayāna doctrine says that the final deliverance (निर्वाण) can be reached by contemplation (दर्शन) and meditation (भावना) of the noble truths. In the Mahāyāna philosophy, worship of the Buddha was an important item. In order to obtain deliverance from Desire, Ignorance and Existence, it is necessary to practice all the virtues and acquire all the knowledge of the Buddhas. They introduced a belief in Bodhisattvas or beings "who were in the process of obtaining but had not yet obtained Buddhahood". Buddha was thus deified, and worship of the images or idols of

Buddha started. The Hīnayāna cult considered salvation of the individual as the chief goal. Mahāyānism had as its objective the salvation of all beings. Hīnayānism prescribed self-culture and good deeds as the only way to salvation; Mahāyānism put more faith in the devotion to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Hīnayāna used Pali as the language to propagate its philosophy, Mahāyānas adopted Sanskrit. In fact, the latter was nearer Hindu thought. The nihilists (शून्यवादीs) among the Mahāyānas regarded the entire universe as illusory (सर्वं शून्यम्), a thought close to the later philosophy of Śankarāchārya, of "Everything is Brahman and all other objects and things that we see are unreal".

All this elaboration becomes useful when we know what Harsha stood for. The observations of Yuan Chwang have left a picture which, though it is not quite perfect, is all the same more useful than the information available with regard to any other period of Indian History. The Buddhism of the Hīnayāna cult mostly remained in South India and Ceylon while the Mahāyāna cult developed besides northern and central India more quickly outside India in countries like Java, Sumatra, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. Naturally Harsha, originally, was following the Hīnayāna cult. The position of Buddhism and of the other religions prevailing in various parts of India at the time of his visit is given by Yuan Chwang.

It will appear that India, as Yuan Chwang saw, was practising at that time three religions *viz.* Buddhism, Brahmanism and Jainism. It must be remembered that Yuan Chwang's visit to India was planned with the express purpose of understanding from the country of its origin the

religion which Lord Buddha established over a thousand years ago and which had, in the course of centuries, swept his country *viz.* China. It is no wonder, therefore, that Yuan Chwang's account should be a little partial so far as Buddhism is concerned. On his own admission, however, Buddhism did not hold sway over the people in regions in which Jainism (of either the Digambara or the Śvetāmbara school) or Brahmanism was still entrenched. The latter had its stronghold mainly in Prayāg (Allahabad) and Vārāṇaśī. Brahmanism as then practised, of course, believed in idolatry and deities of Śiva and Viṣṇu (not to forget Āditya or Aditi) were quite common. In addition to idol worship, Brahmins practised Yajñyas or religious sacrifices. Brahmanism recognised six schools of philosophy all of which believed in the efficacy of the Vedas. Of these, the first school headed by Jaimini believed that salvation can be obtained by an individual only by acting, that is, by doing the right thing. His philosophy was Karma which prescribed all kinds of religious "Dos" and "Donts" and the lighting of the sacrificial fire. The list of various philosophies given by Bāṇa in his *Harsha-charitam* appears a little haphazard. He gives the names of Kapila, Kaṇāda, Upaniśads, Aiswara, the Kramikas (*i.e.* those who believed in the fact that God alone has created the universe) and also the Lokayatikas *i.e.* atheists. The six schools of thought referred to above really are (1) Karma-vādins or Jaiminīyas (2) Gñyān-vādins or Vedantins (3) Sānkhyas (4) Yogas (5) Naiyāyikas and (6) Vaiśeṣikas. All these were the "orthodox" philosophies which believed in the authority of the Vedas. Belief in God as the Creator was not the important test to decide whether a particular school was orthodox or not,

but belief in the Vedas was. The other six heterodox schools did not regard the Vedas as supreme. These were (1) Materialists referred to as the Lokāyatikas by Bāṇa, (2) Jains and (3) to (6) the four schools of Buddhism. These were the broad divisions into which Indian philosophical thinking was split. Bāṇa in his *Harshacharitam* has mentioned various kinds of people—but these did not form a 'school' of philosophical thinking. Bāṅa has also mentioned (1) Hair pullers (केश लुञ्चक) (2) Śaivas, (3) Vāsnis (4) Bhāgavatas (5) Pānchrātrikas and so on. But these represent only some sub-divisions.

Yuan Chwang has described these various non-Buddhists rather crudely: "Some wear peacock's tails, some adorn themselves with a necklace of skulls, some are quite naked, some cover the body with grass or boards, some pull out their hair and clip their moustaches, some mat their side-hair and make a top knot coil". He, however, compliments them by stating that these had promenaded through life away from human affairs and devoted their time and energy to gain knowledge and spirituality.

Harsha was already inclined towards Buddhism even before Yuan Chwang arrived at his court. He was not happy with Brahmanism that was practised with all its details of worship of idols and religious sacrifices. He believed in the philosophy preached by Lord Buddha—Yuán Chwang had come to India with implicit faith in the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism. In order to give wide publicity to the doctrine in which his great foreign visitor believed, Harsha ordered the holding of a huge religious Assembly at Kanauj, his capital. The doctrine of Mahāyāna had, by now, captured the imagination of Harsha. In Yuan Chwang's book Hsi-yu-chi as also in the work "Life of

Yuan Chwang", a somewhat detailed description of the religious Assembly held by Harsha at Kanauj is given. The purpose of the Assembly was, as indicated above, twofold. Firstly, to give publicity to the doctrines of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, and, secondly, to honour the main exponent of that doctrine who had come from China *viz.* Yuan Chwang. The description runs:

"By a special order issued by Harsha and sent through the entire length and breadth of his kingdom—all the disciples of the various schools of thought were asked to assemble in the town of Kānyakubja. The purpose of the Assembly as stated in the order was to 'investigate the treatise of the Master of the Law of China.' It was not the followers of Buddhism alone who were invited, but also Brahmins and 'heretics' of the Five Indias. The march of the king was attended by plenty of pomp. Accompanied by Yuan Chwang, Harsha marched in all pomp and glory along the southern bank of the river Gangā. His principal associate—king Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarupa *i.e.* Assam—walked in step, but on the other bank of the river. The two kings who were ardent devotees of Buddhist philosophy were only divided by the river stream and each of them led the procession on his side which was made up of soldiers who were gorgeously dressed, riding either elephants or boats. They sounded drums, intermittently blowing horns, playing on flutes. These were followed by crowds of people, several thousand in number. The followers took ninety days to reach their destination. They found on arrival that there already were ready to receive them kings of twenty countries of the Five Indias, three thousand priests thoroughly acquainted with the Mahāyāna and

Hīnayāna, in addition to three thousand Brahmins and Nirgranṭhas, and a thousand scholars of the Nālānda University. Both Harsha and Kumāra—the King of Assam—had an escort of 500 war elephants. Harsha had ordered for the creation of two thatched halls to be erected at the place of the Assembly and also a precious tower about 100 feet high, in the middle of which was placed a golden statue of Lord Buddha. The statue was as high as the king himself and was carried gorgeously on an elephant. It was accompanied by the king himself who was dressed like God Indra, while Kumāra of Assam who was in attendance had a white parasol-symbol of God Brahman. Two elephants carrying jewels and flowers followed and yet another elephant carried the Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang. Three hundred other elephants carried the princes, Ministers and chief priests of different countries. These rode in double file on each side of the course of the procession. As the king proceeded along with the procession wending its way, he scattered on either side pearls, gold and silver flowers and many precious articles in honour of the three objects of worhsip *viz.* the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

"On reaching the destination, Harsha first washed the idol at the altar and then himself took it to the western tower and he offered it several silk garments studded with pearls."

It must be noted here that the rites followed by Harsha were peculiar to the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism which was nearer to Hindu thought and practices than the other school. Washing of the image and dressing it up is a typical Hindu form of worship. Harsha had been following this from his childhood, since he was born in a

family of devout Hindus and in spite of his conversion to Buddhism, he continued to follow certain old practices. The account of the Assembly as found in the *Hsi-yu-chi* and the *Life* runs as follows.

"Thereafter came into the hall princes of the twenty countries, a thousand priests and five hundred Brahmins and heretics (Yuan Chwang insists on referring to Jains or perhaps to Brahmins as "heretics" because he was a total believer in Buddhism), two hundred Ministers of various kingdoms. The "unbelievers" were seated outside the hall. The religious ceremonies were followed by a dinner which was served to all people present, whether in the hall or outside it.

Thereafter Harsha opened the conference and formally invited Yuan Chwang to take his seat on a couch and to be the "President" of the Assembly gathering. He referred to Yuan Chwang as the "Lord of the discussions". After he took his seat, Yuan Chwang started the proceedings by extolling the great merits of the Mahāyāna doctrine, and having fixed the subject of discussion asked a "Sramaṇa" from Nālānda named Ming-hien to give his discourse. The Master of Law, Yuan Chwang, had caused a placard to be placed outside the hall. It stated: "If there is any one who can find a single word in the proposition contrary to reason, is able to entangle (the argument), then at the request of the opponent, I offer my head as a recompense.."

Until nightfall, no one came forward to say a word, when Harsha who was, no doubt, pleased at the development, adjourned the Assembly and retired to his palace while others went back to the places where they were to rest.

Next day, the image (there are different versions as regards whether the image was of full size or only three feet in height) was again brought to the hall and the same procedure was followed for five days, at the end of which some followers of the Hīnayāna cult plotted to kill Yuan Chwang. (The Hīnayānists were either outnumbered or outwitted by Yuan Chwang with the support of the king and they felt very slighted at the way the Assembly was proceeding). Somehow King Harsha got the news of the plot through his intelligence service and he, at once, issued a proclamation to the effect that "if any one should hurt or touch the Master of Law, he shall at once be hanged and whoever speaks against him shall have his tongue cut, but all others who would seek profit from his instructions need not fear this manifesto."

One can understand Harsha's anxiety to ensure that his guest and philosopher, a foreigner who visited this country for the sake of knowledge, is not hurt. It was the king's moral responsibility to see that Yuan Chwang returned to China safe and sound. He was therefore right when he said in his proclamation that whoever would hurt or touch the pilgrim would be beheaded. But the further statement attributed to Harsha in his proclamation that 'whoever speaks against him shall have his tongue cut' smacks of religious intolerance. The Assembly at Kanauj was called with the purpose of finding the "Truth". Maybe Harsha was convinced by Yuan Chwang's arguments that "Mahāyāna was the only right path of religion". But to try to smother every mouth that would speak otherwise would hardly lead to a frank discussion.

As was natural, the king's proclamation produced the

desired result and the "followers of error" withdrew and disappeared so that at the end of the Assembly session of eighteen days there was no one who was not "satisfied".

There is another version of the Assembly proceedings. The "Life of Yuan Chwang" gives the account given above. Yuan Chwang's own account, however, as recorded in his "Hsi-yu-chi" does not refer to an attempt on *his* life but on the king's life. He records thus :

"The Assembly was convened not for his own discourse but for the different men of learning who discussed in elegant language on the most abstruse subjects. On the last day of the Assembly a fire broke out in the tower and the pavilion over the gate of the hall constructed at a huge cost specially for the occasion. The fire was, no doubt, extinguished in time. Harsha himself went up to the top of the tower to see for himself what was happening. While descending the steps, he was attacked by a heretic, with a knife in his hand. The king, however, managed to get hold of the attacker. On getting this news, all the kings and noblemen present there demanded that the heretic should be beheaded at once, but Harsha did not have him hanged; on the contrary, he got a confession from him that he was a mere agent of the heretics who had plotted to kill the king because they felt very insulted at the treatment they got in the Assembly. "O King", he said, "You have assembled the people of different countries and exhausted your treasury in offerings to the Śramanas and in casting a metal image of Buddha. *But the heretics who have come from a distance have scarcely been spoken to.* Their minds have therefore, been affected with resentment and they procured me, wretched man that I am, to undertake this foul deed". On hearing this

confession, the five hundred Brahmins who had attended the Assembly were arrested and questioned. They "admitted" that due to a feeling of jealousy against the Śramaṇas for whom the king had "shown reverance" they had set the tower on fire by shooting into it burning arrows and had planned to kill the king in the resulting confusion. They had hired the miscreant to lay in wait for the king to be caught in a narrow passage and to assassinate him. All those present demanded that the five hundred Brahmins be exterminated, but the king sent them into exile and punished only those who took a leading part in the plot.

Whether the account in the *Life* or in Yuan Chwang's records is more correct, one thing stands out clearly, namely that the Kanauj Assembly was only in name an "Assembly of all religious thinkers". Harsha was openly partial not only towards the "Master of Law", but also to Yuan Chwang's way of thinking and whoever thought otherwise had either to keep quiet and suffer humiliation or oppose and face certain punishment. The Assembly, however, did one good turn to Yuan Chwang. His prestige rose tremendously and when it was known to all that Harsha was under his influence, every one showed respect for him. The princes of twenty kingdoms presented him with rare jewels and Harsha himself gave him 10,000 pieces of gold, 30,000 pieces of silver and 100 garments of superior cotton. The pilgrim was too modest to accept any gift and returned all the presents. The king, however, insisted on mounting Yuan Chwang on an elephant and taking him in a procession round the city in company with the Ministers of States and a proclamation was made. The proclamation said that the "Master of

the Law from China has established the principles of the Mahāyāna and overthrown all opposing doctrines; for eighteen days no one has dared to enter on the discussion". The crowd delightedly bestowed upon Yuan Chwang the title Mahāyāna Deva or 'Mokṣa Deva'.

The Kanauj Assembly shows Harsha's religious inclinations. That he preferred Buddhism to other schools of thought was known already. But his attempt to suppress all other thought by not permitting it to be expounded smacks of religious intolerance on his part.

After the Kanauj Assembly, Yuan Chwang announced his plans to go back to his country. But Harsha invited him to attend another similar Assembly. The king used to hold a religious Assembly every five years at Prayāg (Allahabad) at the confluence of the rivers Gangā and Yamunā. This was the holiest of places—so regarded since the Vedic times and it was considered more advantageous to give one mite in charity in this place than a thousand in any other place, and was thus known as the "arena of charitable offerings". Harsha had already performed five such Assembly convocations at Prayāg before, during the previous thirty years of his reign. These Assemblies called Mahā-Mokṣa Pariṣad (महामोक्षपरिषद) were held with the purpose of distribution of royal charities called Mokṣa. Yuan Chwang, though he was anxious to go back to his country, had to yield to the king's gentle persuasion. "If Harsha could not grudge his treasure for others" he said, "he (Yuan Chwang) too could not grudge a little delay in his journey homeward". He, therefore, agreed to be present at the function at which Harsha distributed his accumulated treasure to the poor and needy.

Harsha, thus accompanied by Yuan Chwang arrived at Prayāg. Invitations had already gone to about 500,000 persons of all creeds—"*Śramanas*, *Nirghṭṭas*, heretics, the poor, the orphans and the solitary" of the Five Indias. The distribution arena where the Assembly was held was fifteen li in circumference with Gangā to the north and Yamunā to the south. The 'Life of Yuan Chwang' gives a detailed description: "A square enclosure made with a bamboo hedge measuring 1000 feet on each side and in the middle scores of thatched buildings in which gold, silver and pearls were kept, while silk and cotton garments, as also gold and silver coins, were placed in store houses. Outside the enclosure there was arrangement for partaking of food and refreshments and there were also provided some hundred long buildings in each of which a thousand people might sit down for rest. There also was the tent for Harsha on the northern bank of the river Gangā and also of Dhruvabhaṭa—King of South India—on the west of the confluence. (Dhruvabhaṭṭa was the Valabhi king whom Harsha first defeated; afterwards they became friends and later relations by marriage). Kumāra, the King of Assam, had his tent pitched on the south side of Yamunā, while the space in between was occupied by thousands of people who had gathered there to receive the gifts.

This quinquennial Assembly used to last for as many as seventy-five days. First, the military procession of the followers of Harsha and of the King of Assam embarked in ship and those of Dhruvabhaṭṭa on elephants. All these, along with the kings of eighteen countries, marched in an impressive manner.

On the first day Lord Buddha's image was installed

in a thatched building and worshipped. Gifts of precious articles and clothes were given to the poor. On the second day the image of Āditya (Lord Sun) was similarly installed and on the third day that of 'Īśvara Deva *i.e.* Śiva'. It is interesting to note here that Allahabad (Prayāg) was one of the strongholds of Brahmanic religion and it was perhaps impossible for Harsha to ignore the Hindu deities altogether. The installation of the Hindu deities on the second and third day is thus significant, though the charities given on each of these two days were half of what was given on the first day.

On the fourth day gifts were given on a rather lavish scale to ten thousand men specially selected from among the 'religious community' *i.e.* Buddhists. It would appear that the others were irreligious. Each of these was given pieces of gold, pearl, cotton garment, drinks, flowers and perfumes. Then on the following twenty days (5th to 24th) gifts were given to Brahmins. Details of what was given and in what quantity are not given by Yuan Chwang or by the author of his "Life". The following ten days saw gifts being given to "heretics" (which refers probably to Jains or to the other sects of Buddhism). On the following days, alms were given to poor who had come from far off places—and also to destitutes and orphans.

The distribution of gifts thus went on till the entire treasure was, exhausted. Harsha's practice was, as already stated, to give away all accumulated state wealth to the religious, to the poor, to the destitutes, to the needy every five years. Only horses, elephants, and other possessions of the king which were necessary to run the government were not gifted away. But emulating the example of Lord Buddha himself, Harsha also gave away his gems, his

clothing, necklaces, earrings, bracelets and his head jewel, too.

All being given away, Harsha begged of his sister, Rājyaśrī, an ordinary cloth to cover himself with.

This peculiar method of distributing the State surplus, although it could have been more profitably used for schemes of general welfare, shows the extremely religious bent of Harsha's mind. He had really no love for personal comforts. In modern times we would rather provide for amenities and machinery to help the poor to produce more wealth. But Harsha's Government was, no doubt, so much concerned with the welfare of the individual that every five years it emptied its treasury completely.

Harsha's efforts to promote the well-being of Buddhists is mentioned by Yuan Chwang. Once a year Harsha used to summon all the Buddhist monks together and for twenty-one days supplied them with the regulation requisites. He furnished the chapels and liberally adorned the common halls of the monasteries. He brought the Brethren together for examination and discussion, giving rewards or punishments according to merit or demerit. The most learned of them were advanced to the Lion's Throne and were treated as spiritual guides. While those who were merely "Perfect" in the ceremonial rules were honoured with formal reverence. But others guilty of unbecoming conduct were banished from the country.

Harsha's campaign against Kashmir to recover the tooth of Lord Buddha deserves mention. The records of Yuan Chwang refer to the hospitality of the Kashmir King who treated the pilgrim with respect and gave him twenty clerks to copy out manuscripts and five men to act as attendants. The same king had in his possession the

tooth of Lord Buddha. Harsha being a devout Buddhist was keen on getting that relic. It is said that the Kashmiris were unwilling to part with the sacred tooth, but Harsha either by force or by persuasion was able to take it away. In the Rājatarangini of Kalhana there is a reference to "this country" i.e. Kashmir, being subject to Harsha's rule for some time.

इदं स्वभेदविधुरं हर्षादीनां धराभुवां ।
कंचित्कालमभूद् भोज्यं ततः प्रभृति मण्डलम् ॥

From all this it will appear that under Harsha's rule, Buddhism was a State religion and he systematically encouraged it. The King of Kanauj is said to have practised to the utmost the rules of temperance and sought to plant the tree of religious merit to such an extant that he forgot to sleep or to eat. He prohibited the taking of life and use of animal food under severe penalties. On all the highways he erected hospices (पुण्यशाला) in which was provided food and drink for the needy as also physicians with medicines ready to treat travellers without payment. Like Akbar or Aśoka, Harsha too, a deeply religious man, was a benevolent ruler, devoted to the good of the common man.

VI

POET AND PATRON OF LITERATURE

We have so far seen many sides of Harsha's character. He had to shoulder responsibility of his paternal kingdom at the very young age of fourteen. Then too he had to head a powerful army which almost immediately went into battle firstly to avenge the murder of his elder brother and then to recover from bondage his sister whose husband had beed mercilessly killed. He achieved both these tasks with commendable speed. Not only this but he set on a regular campaign first with a view to teaching a lesson to all small kings that he was powerful enough to punish anyone who tried to start trouble and then, ultimately to establish an empire of his own. He set an example of an elaborate but well managed administration and devoted himself to the task of giving his subjects all the necessities of life. Harsha was deeply religious in outlook and discarded his ancestoral religion and became a devout Buddhist. Not only that, but he was deeply human and, therefore, gave away all the State savings to the poor and the deserving.

If this alone were all that could be said about Harsha, he would have still gone down in history as one of the greatest of men. But this is not all. Besides being a humanitarian, a philanthropist, an able administrator, a brave soldier and a capable general, he was also a man of letters. He not only wrote poems and plays but was also a patron of many a writer. Yuan Chwang has recorded that one fourth of King Harsha's revenue from crown

lands used to be earmarked for rewarding high intellectual eminence. Harsha had given away as many as eighty large villages to a noted Buddhist scholar and had given crores of gold coins to Bāṇa and others. He used to patronise even the outcasts, as will be seen from a poem in which are also mentioned the famous poets Bāṇa and Mayūra. The poem says that "so great is the power of Sarasvati (Goddess of Intelligence) that even the outcaste Divākara became a courier of Harsha on equal terms with Bāṅa and Mayūra.

(अहो प्रभावो वाग्देव्या यन्मातङ्गदिवाकरः।
श्रीहर्षस्याभवत् सभ्यः समो बाणमयूरयोः ॥)

There are references in literature to the fact that Harsha was a great writer. Bāṇa, who has written the life of the king, has referred to Harsha's literary attainment saying that words fail to describe fully the king's poetics skill. (अपि चास्य कवित्वस्य वाचः ..... न पर्याप्तो विषयः।) Bāṇa also says that 'in poetical competitions, he poured out his own words of nectar and not those borrowed from others (काव्यकथासु अपीतमप्यभृतमुद्वमन्तम् ।) In the "Subhāśita Ratna Bhāndara" Harsha has been referred to and honourably mentioned as one of the poets who "gladden this universe by their compositions" (माघश्चोरो मयूरो मुररिपुरपरो भारविः सारविद्यः। श्रीहर्षः कालिदामः कविरथ भवभूत्याह्वयो भोजराजः ॥) The Prasanna-Rāghava, a drama written by poet Jayadeva similarly lists famous poets and their typical achievements each in a different field of literature. According to Jayadeva, the Goddess of Poetry will be surely liked by every one because she wears as her ornaments so many famous poets among whom Harsha is joy incarnate:

(यस्याश्चोरश्चिकुरनिकुरो कर्णपूरो मयूरो
भासो हास: कविकुलगुरु: कालिदासो विलास: ।
हर्षो हर्षो हृदयवसति: पच्चबाणस्तु बाण:
केषां नैषा कथय कविताकामिनी कौतुकाय ।।)

Another author, Śoddhala, in his Udaya-Sundarī-Kathā refers to Harsha as a poet king and a patron who gave crores of golden coins to Bāṇa and also as one whose joy was in diction:

(श्रीहर्ष इत्यवनिवर्तिषु पार्थिवेषु
नाम्नैव केवलमजायत वस्तुतस्तु ।
गीर्हर्ष एष निजसंसदि येन राज्ञा
संपूजित: कनककोटिशतेन बाण: ।।)

In the Bhāva-Bodhini of Madhusūdana it is stated that two poets, Bāṇa and Mayūra, lived at the court of Mahārāja Shri Harsha, the chief of poets, composer of the Nātikā named Ratnāvalī.

The Chinese traveller I-Tsing who, like Yuan Chwang, visited India later, *i.e.* in the latter half of the 7th century has also testified to the fact that Harsha was a man of letters. "King Śilāditya (which was Harsha's name) versified the story of Bodhisattava Jumūtavahana, who surrendered himself in place of a Nāga. This version was set to music, He had it performed by a band accompanied by dancing and acting and thus popularised it in his time."

Harsha's practice of extending patronage to writers and authors has been referred to in the famous work on poetics—Kāvyaprakāśa by Mammaṭa. In extolling the advantages of poetry, Mammaṭa says that composing poems leads, among other things, to earning of wealth :

काव्यं यशसे ऽर्थकृते व्यवहारविदे शिवेतरक्षतये ।
सद्य: परनिर्वृतये कान्तासंमिततयोपदेशयुजे ।।

In further explaining each of these advantages he has illustrated "getting wealth" (अर्थकृते) by stating "like wealth obtained by Bāṇa and others from Harsha" (हर्षादेर्बाणादीनामिव धनम्). In some texts of the Kāvyaprakāśa, the name used is Dhāvaka instead of Bāṇa. The name Dhāvaka could be an error because we know that Bāṇa *was* given a large quantity of gold by Harsha. The point is that Harsha patronised authors and poets whether the correct name is Bāṇa or Dhāvaka. That Harsha gave him wealth is not only known to the author of Kāvyaprakāśa, but the fact of his having given wealth was treated as a standard of illustration. There are unfortunately two controversies started by some commentators of Kāvyaprakāśa. The plain meaning of Mammaṭa's statement is that Harsha patronised authors so much so that the patronage extended by him had become a by-word. But commentators were at pains to explain that Harsha bought the "authorship" of Bāṇa's work "Ratnāvalī" by paying him handsomely. There is internal evidence in the play Ratnāvalī itself to prove that its author was not Bāṇa, but Harsha himself. Firstly, Bāṇa's style, as is seen from Kādambarī, or *Harshacharitam*, is ornate. He is used to employing long sentences, endless similes and mythological allusions. At every step the reader has to cross such hurdles and then only can he understand what Bāṇa has to say. This is not so in the play Ratnāvalī which has a simple plot and a simple style. Then again, if Bāṇa had wanted to make money by selling the "authorship" of his works, he would surely have preferred to sell his other work, Kādambarī, which would surely have fetched him a much larger amount. In the Ratnāvalī there are situations which arose in the life of the king

himself, and it is, therefore, very likely that he himself wrote the play.

There are others who plead the case of Kāvyapradīpodyota, the 17th century commentator on Kāvyaprakāśa. The author says that Dhāvaka was a poet and having composed the Ratnāvalī *in Shri Harsha's name*, obtained much wealth—such is the report. (धावक: कवि: । स हि हर्षनाम्ना रत्नावलीं कृत्वा बहु धनं लब्धवानिति प्रसिद्धम् ।)

A similar story is repeated by Paramānanda as stated in an old report on Sanskrit manuscripts. He also says that a poet named Dhāvaka, having sold his own work, a play called Ratnāvalī, obtained much wealth from the king named Shri Harsha, so it happened long ago : धावकनामा कवि: स्वकृतिं रत्नावलीं नाम नाटिकां विक्रीय हर्षनाम्नो राज्ञ: सकाशाद् बहु धनमवापेति पुरावृत्तम् ।)

Dhāvaka as a poet is unknown to the Sanskrit literature that has come down to us. That he could be such a renowned author seems, therefore, difficult to believe. Besides this controversy veers round only one of the three plays of Harsha. Even these commentators, some of whom came over a thousand years after Harsha, refer only to Ratnāvalī and not to his other two plays, Priyadarśikā and Nāgānanda. Harsha is besides credited with having also written Suprabhātastotra which specifically mentions his name as its author.

There is also a reference to a work called Kavi-Vimarśa supposed to have been written by the famous writer Rājśekhara (author of Kavya Mimāmsā). But there is no known book written by Rājsekhara of the name Kavi-Vimarsa. The conclusion is thus baseless.

कारणं तु कवित्वस्य न संपन्नकुलीनता ।
धावकोऽपि हि यद् भास: कवीनामग्रिमो भवत् ।।

आदौ भासेन रचिता नाटिका प्रियदर्शिका ।
तस्य रत्नावली नूनं रत्नमालेव शोभते ॥
नागानन्दं समालोक्य तस्य श्रीहर्षविक्रमः ।
आनन्दानन्दभरितः स्वसम्यमकरोत्कविम् ॥

A similar conclusion drawn by some to say, on the authority of the above verses, that Bhāsa was the real author of these plays also deserves to be dismissed. We can, therefore, safely conclude that the author of the three plays was Harsha himself.

Let us now try to look at the three plays. The first and the most popular of these is Ratnāvalī. This is a nātikā (as opposed to a Nātaka). The tests for deciding a nātikā are that the theme should be based either on imagination or mythology, the hero should be a king who is modest, munificent and civil, the heroine should be from a royal family and so on. In this form of play, the name of the play itself usually coincides with that of the heroine. That is how this play comes to be known as Ratnāvalī. These nātikās are light comedies with a happy ending and always have only four acts; while a nātaka can have five, seven or even ten acts (as in Mṛchhakaṭikam).

Ratnāvali was a Ceylon (सिंहल-द्वीप) princess whose union with Udayana—the king of Kauśambī—is the main theme of this play.

After the benediction (Ṅandi) the Sūtradāra in the Prelude (Prastāvanā) introduces to the audience the play to be enacted namely, Ratnāvalī, by king Sri Harshadeva. After this begins the Act I proper. King Vikramabāhu of Sinhaladweepa (modern Ceylon) had a daughter, named Ratnāvalī. A sage (Siddha) had predicted some time back that her husband would be a sovereign (Sārvabhauma)

ruler. Yaugandharāyaṇa, the Chief Minister of King Udayana, heard this rumour and acting upon it, sought Ratnāvalī in marriage for his master. King Udayana had already a wife, the Queen Vāsavadattā, and for fear of offending her, the king did not accede to the request. Thereupon Yaugandharāyana got a rumour circulated that Queen Vāsavadattā has disappeared in a forest fire. Vikramabāhu had thus no reason to object to his daughter's marriage with Udayana who was otherwise quite suitable. He sent Ratnāvalī to Kauśāmbī on board a ship. The ship was wrecked in mid-ocean; the princess, however, was rescued while she was clinging to a plank by a businessman. He recognised her by the necklace (Ratna-mālā—hence her name Ratnāvalī), which she always wore. The minister Yaugandharāyana, to whom the rescued princess was brought was careful in not announcing her identity, but introduced her into the Queen's apartments, and asked her to work as an attendant under the name Sāgarikā (rescued from the sea). The audience learns all this through a soliloquy of Yaugandharāyana who narrates all these incidents. The ship which carried Ratnāvalī also carried Bābhravya (Udayana's chamberlain) and Vasubhūti (Vikramabāhu's minister) as the escorts of the princess. They too were rescued but they were unaware of the similar rescue of Ratnāvalī. Honestly believing that she had perished, they kept the affairs to themselves (!) and straightaway joined the army of General Rumaṇvat whom Udayana had ordered to lead an expedition against the Kosala country. (That the Minister of Vikramabāhu should keep the incident to himself is absurd. When the princess is reported to have perished in a shipwreck, he would naturally try to get every one's help to trace her and cannot keep

the "incident" to himself. This is a very weak link in the development of the play.) Thus the only two persons who could have disclosed Sāgarikā's identity were kept away, and Yaugandharāyaṇa thought that she (Sāgarikā) would be able, because of her beauty, to win Udayana's heart under her assumed name. Udayana now enters, accompanied by the court jester (Vidūṣaka). The annual Cupid's carnival was then in full swing. Two maid-servants, Madanikā and Chutalatikā, enter, and dance and sing on the stage. The Vidūṣaka, too, feels inclined to join them in a gay spirit. After a little diversion, the maids deliver a message from the Queen to the king, requesting his presence that day in the Makaranda garden. The king, and the Vidūṣaka accept the invitation and go there. The Queen accompanied by her attendants, Kānchanamālā, Sāgarikā (*i.e.* Ratnāvalī) and others, arrives. The Queen wants to keep beautiful Sāgarikā out of the sight of her husband and sends her away on some pretext. (Why she brought her there is also difficult to understand. It was the Queen who had invited the king in the Makaranda garden. The author wanted to establish that the king did have a glimpse of Sāgarikā and therefore introduced this weak sequence). But Sāgarikā, who was full of curiosity as to how the Cupid's festival was celebrated in this strange land, hides herself behind a tree and looks on. The Queen offers worship to Cupid and then to her husband. Sāgarikā, who had never seen the king before, feels attracted towards him—a case of love-at-first-sight. Here the first Act ends.

In an Interlude (Praveśaka) two maid-servants announce that the king was to go that day to visit the Navamālikā creeper with a view to trying upon it an experiment

which would make it blossom out of season, and that Sāgarikā had gone to a bower of Kadalī plants with painting materials. We are then introduced to Sāgarikā herself who is love-sick and is diverting herself by drawing the picture of the king and looking at it. She is, however, observed by Sugamagatā, her friend; the latter was entrusted with the cage of the Queen's pet-bird (a sārikā). Sāgarikā confesses to Sugamagatā her love for the king. Their conversation is heard and noted by the bird. A diversion is created by the news that a monkey had got loose and was frightening women and children. Sāgarikā and the maid Sugamagatā both leave the stage in a hurry; the sārikā flies away from her cage which was broken open by the monkey. Vidūṣaka enters and tells the king that the news of the success of the experiment on the creeper Navamālikā, which he narrates to the king. They notice the bird (sārikā) who, parrot-like, repeats the confession of love of sāgarikā, which she had listened to. No names are mentioned, however, since the girls' conversation did not contain any names, and the king and the Vidūṣaka wonder whom those words could refer to. Going further, they notice the painting left behind by Sāgarikā. The Vidūṣaka recognised the king in the picture, but neither of them could recognize Sāgarikā whom Sugamagatā had painted at his side and whom they had not seen before. Meanwhile Sāgarikā and Sugamagatā come back to take away the bird and the painting board; and finding that the king and the Vidūṣaka were there, they try to overhear their conversation. By this time the king too has fallen in love with the unknown maiden in the picture; Sugamagatā then introduces her friend to the king. Afraid that the Queen might arrive there and

disapprove of her presence there, Sāgarikā leaves. Queen Vāsavadattā, enters and sees the painting when she recognizes her maid shown by the side of her husband, she naturally gets angry with him for giving evasive answers and leaves in a huff. The king and the Vidūṣaka, leave in a dismal mood. With this the second Act ends.

In an Interlude (Praveśaka) two maid-servants narrate how Sugamagatā had planned to bring about a meeting between the king and Sāgarikā. She was to be disguised as the Queen and Sugamagatā was to appear as the Queen's maid Kānchanamālā. The king enters and the Vidūṣaka acquaints him with the scheme. Meanwhile the Queen too learns of the plot and she arrives there. The king and the Vidūṣaka think that it is not Vāsavadattā but Sāgarikā (in disguise) and begin to speak to her as such; the king soon notices his mistake and tries to pacify Vāsavadattā, but the Queen departs in great anger. Then comes the real Sāgarikā (dressed like Vāsavadattā). She suspects that the plot has been discovered by the Queen and plans to commit suicide. The king again commits a mistake and imagines that she is Vasāvadattā and when he goes forth to rescue her, he sees his mistake and is very much rejoiced at having been unexpectedly united with his beloved. But just then the Queen, repenting her ill-temper and behaviour towards the King, comes back prepared to reconcile. She, however, finds him engaged in paying special attentions to Sāgarikā. The king now feels thoroughly ashamed.

In the last Act, the Queen makes it known that Sāgarikā has been sent away to her father at Ujjayinī, while she secretly keeps her a prisoner in her palace and thus prevents her being seen by anybody. In an Interlude the

maid Sugamagatā gives to the Vidūṣaka the jewelled-necklace. It was worn by Sāgarikā and the latter had handed it over to her to be given to some Brāhmaṇa as a gift. She had in any case decided to end her own life. The Vidūṣaka tells the king how Sāgarikā was sent to Ujjayinī and shows him the jewel-necklace. In the interval news is brought of the success of the expedition against the Kosala country in which Rumaṇvat was engaged. Then enters a magician whose performance the King witnesses; but this is interrupted by the arrival of Bābhravya and Vasubhūti, who were with the army of Rumaṇvat, and who had now returned to the capital. Vasubhūti sees the jewel-necklace with the Vidūṣaka and recognizes it as the same that once belonged to the Princess Ratnāvalī. He then gives a full account of the proposed marriage between Ratnāvalī and Udayana. Somebody brings the news of a fire having broken out in the royal household. Vāsavadattā is afraid that Sāgarikā (who was a prisoner) might lose her life in the fire, and reveals how she has been imprisoned and asks the king to save her. The king promptly rushes and brings Sāgarikā safe out of the fire. It is then discovered that the fire was unreal, having been the work of the magician. Vasubhūti at once recognizes princess Sāgarikā and then everything is satisfactorily cleared up. Vāsavadattā regrets the treatment she has given to her rival ; Yaugandharāyana enters and explains his part in the affairs. He further adds that the magician had been sent by him in order to bring about the release of Sāgarikā. Everyone is happy and the Queen consents to the marriage of Udayana and Ratnāvalī.

The play contains several absurd situations and details

which on the face of them appear unconvincing. But a nātikā is a farcical play and we do not test everything by the criterion of reason. In a light comedy like Ratnāvalī or Priyadarśikā, certain things have to be taken for granted.

Priyadarśikā is the Second play of Harsha. Curiously enough the plot of that play is rather similar to that of the first. In both (Ratnāvalī and Priyadarśikā) the heroine is destined to marry the hero; she falls in love at first sight, is thrown into prison by the jealous queen who attempts to commit suicide (though the methods are slightly different) and is rescued ultimately. The play Priyadarśikā, opens after the invocation and the stage-director (सूत्रधार) announces that Shri Harsha has undertaken the stage-representation of a new play entitled Priyadārśikā on the occasion of the Spring festival.

The old chamberlain enters and says that he is sorry for his king, Dṛḍhavarma of Aṅga, and over the subsequent loss of Princess Priyadarśikā. The King of Kalinga had launched a cruel assault on Dṛḍhavarmā because he had refused to give his daughter in marriage to Vatsarāja Udayana. The chamberlain had carried Priyadarśikā away from the battle scene and kept her in the home of Vindhyaketu, the Forest King. He had plans to take her to King Udayana later.

In the chamberlain's absence, however, some one murdered Vindhyaketu and reduced the place to ashes. The chamberlain does not know whether Priyadarśikā was burnt alive or kidnapped by somebody. There is also a mention of Udayana's elopement with King Pradyota's daughter, Vāsavadattā and of Dṛḍhavarmā's imprisonment. This prologue is the background to the play.

With some recent occurrences involving elopement and prison life, King Udayana and the jester, Vasantaka, seem pleased. The latter, however takes strong exception to the king's praise of prison life, telling him to bury its memory. Thereupon the king makes a vivid comparison between Vāsavadattā and the jail and tells the Vidūṣaka that the latter could only see the inconveniences of prison life but not the points in Vāsavadattā's favour (दोषान् पश्यसि बन्धनस्य न पुनः प्रद्योतपुत्र्या गुणान् ।).

He is very much attached to her. His mind goes to the unfinished war against Vindhyaketu and becomes anxious to know about its favourable developments. Then, General Vijayasena narrates how they achieved victory. Udayana highly commends his enemy's glorious death in action, and promises warm protection to his survivors.

Vijayasena tells him that he has brought with him a girl, thinking her to be Vindhyaketu's daughter. The king places the girl under the personal care of Queen Vāsavadattā.

Dropping a hint of his intention to wage a fresh war against the king of the Kalinga very soon, the king repairs to his inner palace.

The second Act begins a couple of years later. One day the king's clown is summoned by Queen Vāsavadattā. He was observing a fast, and was to attend the Svastivāyana rite in which gifts were given to the Brahmins.

The Vidūṣaka goes to a tank for a bath thinking that he will be the first Brahmin to receive a gift from the Queen. The king follows him. The song of the swans pleases his ears. On the pond a damsel—Āraṇyakā—is seen plucking lotus-blossoms with her frail fingers, talking to another girl. Soon the king's eyes become

intoxicated by her grace and her beauty. Could she be a Naga girl? Is she an incarnation of the moonlight ? The king and his companion overhear the conversation of the two girls from which the former comes to know that the "fairy" is the daughter of Vindhyaketu.

Now the two girls separate and each one goes to gather the flowers. The king's hungry eyes would not leave Āraṇyakā even for a moment. Just at that moment swarm of bees attacks her and she is anxious and calls out annoyed: "Indīvarikā, save me, these wicked bees are hurting me".

The king, at once using the chance, approaches from behind, and clasps her while warding of the bees with his own upper garment, and says gently: "O timid one do not be afraid; these bees, attracted by the fragrance of your breath, are swarming near your face. How can they afford to leave you while you are emitting the lustre of a branch of lotuses"

आयि विसृज विषादं भीरुभृङ्गास्तवैते
परिमलरसलुब्धा वक्त्रपद्मे पतन्ति ।
विकिरसि यदि भूयस्त्रासलोलायताक्षी
कुवलयवनलक्ष्मीं तत्कुतस्त्वां त्यजन्ति ।।

Instead of feeling assured by the kings' words Āraṇyakā is terrified by his action. She shouts for her companion Indīvarikā to come to her help. The Vidūṣaka comes forward and tells her that the unknown gentleman is Vatsaraja Udayana, and she at once beholds him with shame and affection because he is the very king to whom she was betrothed by her father.

A few days pass after the action of the second act. The hero and the heroine are enamoured of each other. They pine for each other as they are not able to meet for fear of the queen.

Āraṇyākā is seen seated in the banana grove deeply lost in thought and muttering to herself; Manoramā, her friend who has just arrived there overhears the soliloquy and comes to know of her immense longing for the king. She wonders whether death might prove her only solace. She, has fallen in love with the king and now the burning passion consumes her without being able to find an outlet.

To comfort Āranyakā, Manoramā advances towards her. At that moment Vasantaka appears on the scene in the hope of seeing Āranyakā at the pond after searching for her in every nook and corner.

The king is also afflicted by the arrows of Cupid, as he himself says. A secret arrangement is devised by Vasantaka and Manoramā to bring about the lovers' second meeting.

A Court lady known as Sāngrakṛtyāyanī has woven into a play the episode of Udayana and Vāsavadattā and the play is to be staged. Āranyakā has a role to play in it. The time for staging the play has arrived.

In the theatre all the spectators including Vāsavadattā, Sāngrakṛtyāyanī and the ladies-in-waiting have assembled to watch the final portion of the dramatized story of the king.

The play within the play, as we see in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, begins. Āranyakā appears on the stage in the disguise of Princess Vāsavadattā, with her maid, Kāñchanmālā, and plays on a flute and sings ; Manoramā, who is to play the role of Udayana, is not there but is waiting outside the theatre according to the secret arrangement she has made with the Vidūṣaka. The lovelorn king asks Vidūṣaka whether the idea is that he plays

his own role in the play. The latter replies in the affirmative! Thereupon the king enters the stage while Manoramā and Vasantaka go to the adjoining picture hall from where they watch the play. Confused Vāsavadattā wondering whether it was Manoramā playing the king's role or the king himself rises to pay him her homage, and the king finds his heart almost frozen imagining that he is detected by her. Sāṅgkṛtyāyanī, however, reminds Vāsavadattā that it is a theatrical show.

The play goes on and everyone is full of praise for the perfect disguise and action of Manoramā as King Udayana.

In the meantime, Manoramā and Vasantaka are watching the interesting scene, but the latter soon falls asleep. Āranyakā disguised as Vāsavadattā is singing pathetic love-songs demonstrating her plight, and the king sits close by her side. Queen Vāsavadattā—is annoyed at this and tells Sāṅgrakṛtyāyanī, the author of the play, that the portrayal is wrong because at that time she did not share a seat with the fettered king.

The king grasps Āranyakā's hand and places it on his bosom, and she feels thrilled, though she knows that it is Manoramā, who is holding her hand.

Udayana, on the other hand, is exceptionally happy. But Vāsavadattā is first embarrassed, then exasperated and walks away. Vasantaka is dozing at the door of the picture hall. He is presently awakened by the queen's arrival. The foolish man with his eyes half-opened and still drowsy, says to her, "Manoramā, has my dear friend come after finishing his part?" These foolish words uttered under the spell of drowsiness reveal every-

thing about the play-within-the-play. Queen Vāsavadattā immediately orders the arrest of Vasantaka and Āranyakā; Manoramā, however, escapes the arrest by means of her timely excuses. Vatsaraja Udayana stands aghast, and then kneels down at the feet of his wife begging of her to forgive him for his offence.

This act is very important in the play. The intrigue planned to effect a union between the two lovers and the "play-within-the-play" are manifestations of Harsh's dramatic skill.

Many days have elapsed since the incident that took place in the third act. The girl is still in detention.

Disappointed in love and so tired of life Āraṇyakā attempted to commit suicide which was averted by her friend somehow.

This is what the audience knows from the soliloquy of Manoramā; a short dialogue between her and Kāñchanmālā informs us that Queen Angarāvatī has despatched a letter of complaint to her daughter, Vāsavadattā. More than a year has passed since king Dṛḍhavarmā, the maternal uncle of Vāsavadattā was captured and thrown into a dungeon by the king of the Kalingas and no action against the offender had yet been taken by Udayana.

Queen Vāsavadattā is sorrowful and helpless. She imagines that her husband would never pay any attention to her condition since she is now nothing to him.

Sāṅgrakṛtyāyanī in her turn exerts herself to the utmost to comfort the dejected Queen, reassuring her that the king will not remain indifferent to the matter.

The scene changes; the king and the Vidūṣaka appear on the stage discussing how to free Āranyakā.

The Vidūṣaka suggests to him : "Crush the harem with

your army and set her at liberty," but the king knows that there is no other way to secure Āraṇyakā's freedom than the queen's pleasure. He asks Vasantaka what could be done to please her. He is frivolously advised to undergo a fast for a month. (Vidūṣaka has not only either escaped from the prison or has been released. There is no mention however about his release or escape.) The king now goes to see Vāsavadattā with his unwilling clown. On seeing the king, the queen rises from her seat as a courtesy, and asks him whether he now felt ashamed of his past action.

"I feel truly ashamed of.....the offence" says the king, and he sits down on the floor with his hands folded to beg her pardon. He does not want to lose his queen's love. At this stage Sāṅgrakṛtyāyānī explains to him the cause of her present despair namely the fate of king Dṛḍhavarma. The king becomes relaxed at this, and discloses that he has already despatched an expedition commanded by his General Vijayasena against the Kalinga King and adds that he is eagerly expecting the happy news of victory from the General.

Just then, Vijayasena and Dṛḍhavarmā's chamberlain arrive on the stage with the news of final victory and the subsequent reinstatement of Dṛḍhavarmā. Now the rather gloomy scene brightens into rejoicings and particularly Queen Vāsavadattā's joy knows no bounds. Making use of this joyous moment, Vasantaka, the fool, who has hitherto kept quiet at once makes several suggestions that on such a happy occasion as this, the preceptors should be worshipped, the Brahmins should be honoured and all the prisoners should be released. The queen at once catches their meaning.

Consent having been obtained, Sāṅgkṛtyāyanī goes out to free Āraṇyakā. And the chamberlain conveys the message of his king and further narrates the sad fate of Princess Priyadarśika who was betrothed to Udayana and who at the end vanished.

At this news Queen Vāsavadattā becomes tearful, particularly, over the loss of her cousin. However, the king and Vijayasena come to believe that the princess referred to is none else than Āranyakā. Then Manoramā enters on the scene in a great hurry, informing them that Āraṇyakā is in danger. She had drunk the poison brought under the pretext of wine. Vāsavadattā, frightened at this unexpected development orders Manoramā to bring her thither, so that her husband who knew an antidote against poison might save her.

Āranyakā is instantly brought in a restless condition and the king cures her with the recipe he has learned from the Nagas. Her identity is duly revealed by the chamberlain. The generous hearted queen offers her newly-acquired cousin, Priyadarśikā to the king with a smile and the curtain rolls down to announce that the episode of King Udayana and Princess Priyadarśikā is over.

It will be seen that Priyadarśikā uses certain situations similar to those in Ratnāvalī. In both, the same hero—king Udayana—is ultimately united with his beloved, and all ends well.

Among the three plays, the Nāgānanda consisting of four acts, technically called a Nātakam, is a unique piece depicting the noble spirit of self-sacrifice on the part of the hero, Jīmūtavāhana who willingly sacrifices himself to save the life of a Nāga, a serpent. Its purpose is to extol the glory of self-negation, which is the specific feature of

the Buddhist dogma. All the characters are mythological creatures rather than human beings. This play is not a light comedy like the other two plays of Harsha. There is confusion in the plot because there is hardly any connection between the first three acts on the one hand and the last two on the other. The last two acts do not form a sequel to the development of the first three acts. Perhaps, Harsha's dramatic skill failed him completely.

After the invocation, the stage director (सूत्रधार) announces that on the occasion of Indra festival he has been requested by the feudatory kings of Shri Harsha to perform a play dealing with the tale of the Vidyādhara Jātaka composed by him, and that he is sure of its success on the stage.

Accompanied by Vidūṣaka, the young prince of Vidyādharas wanders about the forests of the Malaya mountain in search of a penance grove. His fidelity and selfless service to his parents is more important to him than the pleasures of a king.

Roaming the mountain, he comes to a hermitage.

Then we notice that the heroine, Malayavatī, had a dream in which Goddess Gaurī, pleased with her devotion to her, has ordained that her future husband will be the King of Vidyādharas. (In another play of Harsha we see him using a 'prediction', in this play a 'dream').

Vidūṣaka drags the shy prince into the presence of the princess and love at first sight captures their hearts, but their first meeting as strangers terminates when a messenger from the hermitage conveys to her the order of the sage that she should return to the hermitage for the mid-day oblation. The first Act ends here.

A conversation takes place between the two maids of Princess Malayavatī from which we learn of her desire to take rest in the bower of Sandal-creepers. She wanted to ward off the fatigue caused by collecting the flowers and also by the autumnal heat. It is not the "external heat" that was troubling her.

This act takes place in a morning and portrays a further development of the love between the hero and the heroine, describing their burning passions. It also depicts Jīmūtavāhana's benevolent nature and selfless spirit of service to the well-being of others.

Suffering from love-sickness for which there seems no remedy the heroine reclines on the stone-slab in the Sandal bower. Her maid, to whom the secret of her heart has been confessed, tries to allay her torment by applying Sandal juice on her bosom. The heroine's answer is appropriate when she says that there is only one remedy against her ailment and that is her lover's presence.

Now a sound of foot-steps is heard and startled by it the two girls hide behind a red Aśoka tree.

The lovelorn hero, accompanied by Vidūṣaka enters and sits on the stone-slab where he has seen, in his dream, his beloved weeping for some reasons unknown to him. He describes his dream which the heroine overhears from behind the tree; but she becomes disappointed with the narration which she completely misunderstands. He then paints his love on the stone slab and finds delight in his painting.

Mitrāvasu, the brother of the Princess, approaches there unannounced; the king conceals the painting under a banana leaf. Mitrāvasu, who is the son of the king of Siddhas, proposes to offer his sister's hand in marriage

to the king. But the hero not knowing that Mitrāvasu's sister was Malayavatï, his beloved, declines the offer. Vidūṣaka however asks Mitrāvasu to obtain the consent of Jīmūtavāhana's father for the proposed wedding.

The heroine, having listened to the conversation is in a desparate state of mind, thinking that the king may be in love with some one else. She tries to commit suicide by hanging herself with a creeper-noosed.

Her maid, however, hides nearby. She raises an alarm, when Malayavatī is about to hang herself and hearing that, the hero dashes to the spot and stops Malayavatī from committing suicide.

She is then brought to the very stone-slab and shown the painting painted by the hero, whereby she becomes convinced of his love for her.

Now a maid comes and announces that Malayavatī's wedding was to take place immediately.

As a part of the wedding ceremony all the Siddha and Vidyādhara people are now enjoying a banquet in the Kusumākara garden on the Malaya mountain. The drunken Viṭa, named Shekharaka, enters the garden with his servant bearing a liquor pot on his shoulder, and is expecting his sweetheart, Navamalikā there. The Vidūṣaka too, comes to the garden to see his friend Jīmūtavāhana with his body wrapped in red garments to avoid molestation by the bees.

Under the influence of intoxication, Shekharaka, mistakes him for his beloved and embraces him.

This scene is being watched by his real sweetheart Navamālikā in jealous anger. "O' you son of a slave girl ! That Navamālikā is not here ?" shouts the jester to him.

The scene changes. The hero and the heroine now happily married, appear in conversation. The hero is happy, and the heroine's face now reddened by the sun's heat and surpassing the moon by the lovely cheeks is an eternal joy to him. She, too, is very happy, and his love, his very presence, are thrilling her.

The happy moment, however passes and Mitrāvasu brings information that his kingdom has been looted by Mātaṅga. He asked for permission to kill the enemy. But the hero would not give his consent to the slaughtering of a living being even if his kingdom or his life was in danger.

He is not at all disturbed by the tidings and is prepared to give away his own life for the happiness of a living creature. To demonstrate his viewpoint he glorifies the sun whose only effort is the good of others. Here ends the third act.

The chamberlain of Mitrāvasu's father and the doorkeeper are seen talking to each other. The former has been commanded by the queen, Mitrāvasu's mother, to take the red garments to the bride and the bridegroom to be worn for a period of ten days on the occasion of happy Dīpāvalī festival. The latter also tells that he has been commanded by king Viśvāvasu to summon his son Mitravāsu to give some gift to his son-in-law on the same occasion.

Jīmūtavāhana and his brother-in-law Mitrāvasu are taking a walk on the seashore. High over the peaks piles of bones, white as the snow-clad Himalayan peaks, soon catch the sight of Jīmūtavāhana. He learns from his brother-in-law that these were the accumulated heaps of the skeletons of the serpents devoured by Garuḍa, the

king of birds. The latter had agreed to eat only one big snake daily offered by Vāsuki, the serpent-king, in accordance with the pact reached between them. The pact was made with a view to saving the Naga (serpent) race from its imminent extermination by Garuḍa. Jīmūtavāhana the symbol of compassion and ahimsā is horrified at the sight. The doorkeeper comes in to call Mitrāvasu away at his father's request.

Now left alone, Jīmūtavāhana hears weeping of a woman and finds that the woman's son, Śaṅkhachūḍa, a Nāga, is scheduled to fall a prey to the Garuḍa. Sympathising with the woman, Jīmūtavāhana volunteers to sacrifice himself in place of the young Nāga.

"What is the use of my body, if I do not save this distressed one.....?" so saying, he persuades Śaṅkhachūḍa to hand over to him the red garments which are to be put on by the serpent who was marked as Garuḍa's next victim. Śaṅkhachūḍa, however, would not accede to Jīmūtavāhana's proposal. He felt that if he did so, disgrace would befall his respectable family.

On the other hand, Jīmūtavāhana, impelled by his lofty spirit, is equally determined to take his place and gladly gives away his life that is nothing to him as compared with the welfare of the unfortunate.

The arrival of the hungry devil Garuḍa is imminent. Śaṅkhachūḍa leaves the spot to offer his last salutation to the Southern Gokarṇa.

Just at that time the chamberlain approaches and presents a pair of red garments to the hero and goes away. These red clothes are presents from Malayavatī's parents.

Clad in red, Jīmūtavāhana ascends the slaughter stone. Garuday comes and carries him away to the summit

of the mountain. A shower of heavenly flowers in acknowledgement of his heroic deed rains from the heavens and a drum-sound is heard. At last he has realized his object. The fourth act ends.

The door-keeper presents himself into the presence of Jīmūtavāhana's family to ascertain his whereabouts; his father-in-law is anxious over his undue delay, since he had not returned from the beach so far.

His aged parents and his wife feel an evil-omen and become uneasy over his prolonged absence, they imagine that some evil might have befallen him. Śaṅkhachūḍa now returns to the previous spot, having hurriedly worshipped the Gokarṇa. "Alas ! alas ! I have been deceived by Destiny", cries he on finding that the prince has sacrificed his body in his stead during his brief absence.

He feels sorry for Jīmūtavāhana—an incarnation of benevolence and lofty ideals. He then follows the line of his blood, full of tears and dejected, and soon reaches the vicinity of the place where the worried family is standing. They learn from him that Jīmūtavāhana has been victimized by the cold-blooded Garuḍa. All of them faint. After regaining consciousness they too pursue the blood-line led by the Nāga intending to burn themselves in case Jīmūtavāhana is dead.

High on the summit we see Garuḍa and the hero in a serious condition lying before him. His blood is profusely sucked, his flesh is torn by the terrible claws of the bird. Yet the hero remains calm and satisfied, with no feelings of physical pains.

Garuḍa's is curious to know who he was. The hero's blood is oozing but there is still flesh left in his body.

Then, in a great haste, Śaṅkhachūḍa still dressed in

red garments approaches, followed by three others. Both the Nāga and the hero bear the same symbol of a victim and Garuḍa is at a loss to know which one of them was to be his prey. Śaṅkhachūḍa explains that *he* was the victim sent by Vāsuki. Garuḍa realises that he committed a grave mistake. His heart is now full of remorse.

The hero's parents and his wife are distressed at his pathetic plight. The father admonishes the son, saying that his action would save only one Nāga but he should have thought of saving all Nāgas. At this stage Garuḍa intends to jump into a fire in atonement of his sins. The hero requests him not to do so, saying that genuine atonement for sins does not lie in self-destruction but in giving security to and helping all living beings. The hero is on the verge of death with no strength left in him, and he asks the Nāga to help him fold his hands in an effort to offer his last salutation to his parents and draws his last breath.

All prepare a funeral pyre to burn themselves to death, including Śaṅkhachūḍa. Garuḍa, now a changed being, flies up into the sky. He intends to ask Indra to shower nectar in order to bring back to life the hero and all the serpents previously devoured by him.

All of a sudden, Goddess Gaurī appears on the scene and truly satisfied with the devotion of Malayavatī to her and the glorious self-sacrifice of Jīmūtavāhana, showers upon them all a great favour by bringing the hero to life again.

She also restores to him his kingdom, conferring upon him the title of the Emperor of Vidyādharas. At this very moment a shower of nectar pours down from the heaven. Here ends the story.

As stated earlier the play is very loosely joined and is also difficult to stage. Unlike the other two plays, this is a serious one, obviously written by Harsha after he became a convert to Buddhism.

So many expressions are found repeated in two or even all the three plays of Harsha. Even though it would establish clearly that Harsha wrote all the three plays, it also shows that the author was either careless or lacked sufficient variety in expression.

The following sentences occurring in Ratnāvalī appear almost word for word in Nāgānanda or Priyadarśikā :

सखे । अतो ऽपि सन्तापो ऽधिकतरं मां बाधते ।

भो वयस्य प्रच्छादय अनेन कदलीपत्रेण इमां चित्रगतां कन्यकाम् ।

अये कथमनभ्रा वृष्टिः ।

कथं प्रत्यभिज्ञातास्म्यनेन ।

हताश । अनुभव तावदात्ममो ऽविनयस्य फलम् ।

Many more repetitions can be found in the three plays.

There is a shadow as it were of the Bhāsa technique in Harsha's plays. The hero—though happily married—is attracted towards another beauty. The latter is introduced in the royal household by some kind of trick and the hero gets opportunities to make advances towards her just when he is caught by the queen but in the end all is well.

The character delineations or plot development is of course inferior in comparison with that of Kālidāsa or Bhavabhooti.

So much about Harsha's plays.

In addition to "Suprabhātastrotra" Harsha also wrote "Aṣta-Mahā-Śrichaitya Sanskrit-Stotra". The latter is a poetic description of eight famous Buddhist Chaityas. It is curious that we come to know about its existence from its Chinese version. Yuan Chwang has referred to

it as "Śilāditya-Kṛti". The Banskhera and Madhuban Plate inscriptions are also Harsha's own creations. The style of the poems in these plates follows that in Harsha's plays.

VI

HARSHA'S DEATH AND AFTER

Soon after Yuan Chwang's departure from this country, King Harsha died. Details of how he died and where exactly he died are not available. Even the exact date or year of his death is a matter of controversy. The life of Yuan Chwang only records that "towards the end of the Yuan Hwei period" Siladitya died. This would place his death in the middle of fifties of the 7th century. But it is also on record that the Emperor of China sent an ambassador expressly to Harsha's court. The name of the ambassador was Wang-heuen-tse, and he was sent "in order that the principles of humanity and justice which had been diffused in that country should have a protector and representative there". The ambassador appears to have arrived in 648 A.D. when the King had already died.

Harsha thus reigned for less than half a century (from 605 to about 647). He started at the age of fourteen, when he was too young to shoulder the responsibility even of the small kingdom of Sthāṇvīsvara. But he proved to be equal to that and later to much more than that. He started on a regular campaign in which he not only punished wrong-doers but also inspired awe among the waverers, and established a great empire, the like of which was seen in India only during the days of Aśoka and later during the Moghul rule. Harsha's rule was benign; he exerted himself day and night for the poor and the needy. He was, as we have seen, a scholar too and wrote plays

and poems.

The death of such a great man would naturally leave a vacuum too difficult to fill. Harsha's death unleashed almost immediately forces of anarchy and chaos. Yuan Chwang was said to have had a dream in which he was told by a golden figure "You should return soon, for after ten years Silāditya will be dead and India be laid waste in rebellion, wicked men will slaughter one another-remember these words of mine" (recorded in the "Life of Yuan Chwang").

On Harsha's death a minister usurped the throne. We have no information if Harsha had any sons; he had, however, a daughter whom he married to Dhruva-Bhaṭṭa of Valabhi. The minister at once attacked the Chinese ambassador whose men were slain but who managed to escape himself. Harsha's best friend, the King of Assam—severed connection with Kanauj and annexed a part of Harsha's empire around Bengal. In Magadha, the later Guptas became independent of Kanauj and the empire so bravely acquired, so carefully consolidated and so ably governed by the great Harsha fell apart.

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BORN IN 1913, Shri V. D. Gangal was educated in the Elphinstone College, Bombay, where he also worked for two years as Daxina Fellow. He has published two works in collaboration with another scholar, a critical study of Bhāsa's famous play—'Svapnavāsavadattam' and a portion of Bāna's Kādambari'. He has also written a play in Sanskrit known as 'Bhartṛhariyam' depicting the life of the famous poet Bhartṛhari, the author of Nīti, Śṛangāra and Vairāgya Śatakas.

Shri Gangal, is a member of the Indian Administrative Service.

In the present book he has brought out the great personality of Harsha, one of the outstanding figures of Indian History.